Religious Perfection.

OR, A

THIRD PART OF THE ENQUIRY AFTER HAPPINESS.

By the Author of

Practical Christianity.

(R. Lucas, D.D.)

Therefore leaving the Principles of the Doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto Perfection, Heb. 6. 1.

The Second Edition.

LONDON:

Printed for Sam. Smith and Benj. Walford, at the *Princes Arms* in St. *Paul's Church-Yard.* MDCXCVII.

TO

Mr. *Whitelocke Bulſtrode*,

Of *Clifford*'s-Inn.

I Here preſent You, my dear Friend, with a Diſcourſe, wherein I Labour to advance the great and true Ends of Life, the Glory of God, and the Perfection and Happineſs of Man. I cannot, I confeſs, pretend to have come up to the Dignity of my Subject; yet I have done what I could, and have attempted it with my utmoſt Force. I know You too well to imagine You fond of an Addreſs of this publick nature: You love the real and ſolid Satisfactions,

not the Pomp and Shew, thoſe ſplendid Incumbrances of Life: Your rational and virtuous Pleaſures burn, like a gentle and chearful Flame, without Noiſe or Blaze. However, I cannot but be confident, that You'll pardon the Liberty which I here take, when I have told You, That the making the beſt Acknowledgment I could to One, who has given Me ſo many Proofs of a generous and paſſionate Friendſhip, was a Pleaſure too great to be reſiſted. I am,

Dear Sir,

Unfeignedly Yours,

R. Lucas.

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THE

THE
Introduction.

BY *what Steps I am advanc'd thus far* in my Enquiry after Happineſs, *and what Connexion or Coherence there is, between* This *and two* other *Diſcourſes already Publiſh'd on That Subject, is very obvious. In the* Firſt, *I endeavour to remove thoſe Objections which repreſent all Enquiries and Attempts after true Happineſs in this Life, either as fantaſtick or unneceſſary, or which is as bad, vain and to no purpoſe: And after I have aſſerted the* Value *and* Poſſibility *of Happineſs, I do in general point out the true Reaſons of our ill Succeſs and Diſappointment in Purſuit of it. In the* Second, *I ſtate the true Notion of* Human Life, *inſiſt upon the ſeveral kinds of it, and ſhew what Qualifications and Virtues the* Active *and* Contemplative *Life demand; and then conſider how Life may be prolonged and improved. In This* Third, *I proſecute the ſame Deſign, which I had in the two Former; the promoting Human Happineſs. For* Life, Perfection *and* Happineſs *have a cloſe and inſeparable Dependence on one another. For as* Life, *which is the Rational Exerciſe and*

and Employment of our Powers and Faculties, does naturally advance on, and terminate in Perfection ; *ſo* Perfection, *which is nothing elſe, but the Maturity of Human Virtue does naturally end in that Reſt and Peace, that Tranquility, Serenity, and Joy of Mind, which we call* Happineſs. *Now* Perfection *in an Abſtracted and Metaphyſical Notion of it, is a State that admits neither of Acceſſion nor Diminution. But talking of it Practically, and in a manner accommodated to the Nature of things, the* Perfection *of Man conſiſts in ſuch Endowments and Attainments as Man is generally capable of in this Life. And becauſe Man may be conſidered either in Relation to* This, *or to* another *World, therefore* Human Perfection *may, I think, naturally enough be divided into* Religious *and* Secular. *By* Secular, *I mean that which regards our Intereſt in this Life: By* Religious, *That which ſecures it in Eternity; the one more directly and immediately aims at the Favour of Man ; the other at the Favour of God ; the one purſues that Happineſs, whatever it be, that is to be found in outward and worldly Advantages ; the other, That which flows from Virtue and a good Conſcience. 'Tis eaſy now to diſcern, which of theſe two kinds of* Perfection *is the more deſirable ; the one purifies and exalts our Nature, the other poliſhes and varniſhes*

niſhes it; the one makes a compleat Gentleman, the other a true Chriſtian; the Succeſs of the one is precarious, that of the other certain; having no Dependence on Time or Chance, the Humour or Fancy of Man; the Pleaſure of the one is ſhort and Superficial; That of the other, Great and Laſting: The World *admires the one, and* God *approves the other. To be throughly perſuaded of* This, *is a good ſtep towards true Wiſdom, as being that, which will enable Man to ſteer the whole Courſe of Life aright. But while I prefer the one, I do not preſcribe the Neglect or Contempt of the other; ſo far am I from it, that I am of Opinion, That Secular* Perfection *has very often ſome Influence upon our Spiritual State, as well as its uſe and Advantage in Reference to our Temporal one: That the moſt admir'd Accompliſhments of a Secular Life, are ſo far from being inconſiſtent with Religion, that they naturally ſpring from it, and thrive and flouriſh moſt when they are influenc'd and cultivated by it; and judging that it might be of ſome ſervice to the World, to inform and convince them of* This, *I had it ſometimes in my Thoughts to have Treated here as well of Secular as Religious Perfection: But doubting how well this might ſuit with my Function, and how far the beſt Obſervations I could make on this Subject, might fall ſhort*

of

of anſwering the Expectation of Men of worldly Parts and Experience, I laid aſide the Deſign. Here then, I confine my Meditations wholly to RELIGIOUS PERFECTION; *I examine the Nature of it, both in General, and in Particular; not only ſtating the true Notion of it, but alſo deſcending to the ſeveral Branches and Parts of it; I free it from thoſe Miſtakes and Diſputes that perplex and encumber it; I lay down the Motives to it, and preſcribe the Ways of obtaining it.*

After this ſhort Account of my Deſign; the next thing I am to do is, to prevent, if I can, thoſe Prejudices which may either wholly fruſtrate, or at leaſt very much hinder and diminiſh the ſucceſs and Influence of it. Some are apt to ſtartle at the very mention of Perfection; *they have entertain'd ſuch humble Thoughts, not only of Human Nature, but as it ſeems, of Divine Grace too, and Evangelical Righteouſneſs, that all talk of Perfection ſeems to them like the Preaching a New Goſpel, and an obtruding upon the World a Fantaſtick Scheme of proud and pretending Morality. But this fear will ſoon vaniſh, when I tell ſuch, that I diſcourſe of the* Perfection *of* Men, *not* Angels: *And, that I treat* This, *not like a* Monk, *or a ſublime and ſubtle* Schoolman, *but like one, who have been daily converſant with the Doubts and Scruples, with the Fears and Frailties of Human*

man Nature, and departing Souls. I do not pretend to bleſs the World with the Diſcovery of New *Truths. If at any time I place* Old *ones in a better Light; if I wipe off the Duſt, which Diſpute and Time, and the Corruption of Manners, has here and there ſcattered upon them, 'tis the utmoſt I aim at.*

But how Numerous, will ſome ſay, are the Controverſies that have in every Age perplex'd this Subject? Grace *and* Nature, Perfection *and* Sin, Merit, Supererogation, *&c. Theſe are Themes that have exerciſed and embroiled the Church of Chriſt, almoſt through all the ſeveral Ages of it down to this Day: And with how little Advantage to the Honour of Chriſtianity, or the Intereſt of Virtue, have the brighteſt Parts, and the deepeſt Learning been here employed? To* This, *all I have to ſay, is, I write Practically, and conſult the Intereſt of Souls, not* Parties. *I cannot but ſee, and that with Trouble and Regret, how much Chriſtianity has in almoſt all times ſuffered by thoſe Nice and Subtle, by thoſe Obſtinate and Paſſionate Diſputes, with which Writers have even oppreſſed and ſtifled the moſt* Practical *Subjects; and do moſt earneſtly deſire to ſee the Spirit of* Polemical *Divinity caſt out of the Church of Chriſt, and* That *of a* Practical *and* Experimental one *eſtabliſhed in the Room of it. Though therefore, I have conſidered thoſe Controverſies*

which

which concern my Subject, it was with no other Deſign, than to guard and fortify my Reader againſt the ill Influence of ſeveral Errors, with which they abound. I decline all uſeleſs Speculations, and labour wholly to reſtore Religion to its Native Strength and Beauty; ſo that I think this Objection will not touch me, who do not propoſe to write a Learned, *but an* Uſeful *Book.*

If any Man be apprehenſive, that 'tis impoſſible to aſſert the Doctrine of Perfection *without looking a little too favourably towards* Pelagianiſm *or* Enthuſiaſm, *or ſomething of this kind; I do here aſſure ſuch a one, that I advance no* Perfection *that raiſes Men above the Uſe or Need of* Means, *or invites them to neglect the* Word, Prayer, *or* Sacraments, *or is rais'd on any other Foundation than the* Goſpel *of* Chriſt. *I revive not* Pelagianiſm, *nor claſh with St.* Auſtin; *I need not thoſe Conceſſions which he makes* Cœleſtius *in the Cloſe of his Book* de Perfectione Juſtitiæ. *I am perſuaded that the ſtrength of* Nature *is too ſlight a Foundation to build* Perfection *on: I contend for* Freedom *from no other Sin than* Actual, Voluntary, *and* Deliberate: *And let Concupiſcence, or any unavoidable Diſtemper, or Diſorder of our Nature, be what it will, all that I aim at here is, the* Reducing, *not* Extirpating *it. And finally, how earneſtly ſoever I exhort to* Perfection,

fection, *I can very well content my ſelf with St.* Auguſtin's Notion *of it, namely, That it is nothing elſe, but* a daily Progreſs towards That pure and unſpotted Holineſs, which we ſhall attain to in another Life.

Thus, I think, I have ſufficiently guarded this following Diſcourſe againſt the Miſapprehenſions and Jealouſies of all, who have any ſerious Concern for Religion, how much ſoever they may be ſwayed by ſome particular Opinions. But after all, I do not expect that it ſhould meet with a very obliging Reception from a great Part of the World. Many there are, who will ever openly rally and ridicule all Attempts of this kind: And there are Others, who will ſecretly ſlight, and inwardly deſpiſe them as the vain and fond Projects of well meaning indeed, but very weak and unexperienced Mortals. But this moves me little; theſe Men are generally too much ſtrangers to Sincerity, *to be competent Judges of* Perfection: *Nor do I wonder, if the Corrupt and Vicious part of Mankind, be infected with as much Malice and Envy againſt extraordinary Goodneſs, as ſome are againſt Power and Greatneſs. The Conſciouſneſs of much Baſeneſs and Corruption in ones ſelf, is apt to make one ſtrive to bring down all Men to the ſame Level, and to believe that there is nothing of* Perfection *in the World, but only a Groundleſs or Hypocritical Pretenſion*

to

to it. This is an Opinion that ill Men greedily embrace, becauſe it gives them ſome kind of Peace, Security, and Confidence; whereas the contrary Opinion, as it would be apt to make them aſhamed of their Preſent *State, ſo would it make them fearful and apprehenſive of their* Future *One. I write not therefore to ſuch as theſe, nor can be much concerned what Cenſure they paſs on a Deſign, againſt which they have an Inveterate and Obſtinate Averſion.*

The Method I obſerve in this Treatiſe is: In the Firſt Section, *I conſider* Perfection *more generally: In the* Second, *The ſeveral Parts of it; And in the* Laſt, *The* Obſtacles *and* Impediments *of our attaining it. In the two Firſt Sections, I always firſt fix and explain the* Notion *of that State of Virtue which I Diſcourſe of. Next I proceed to the* Fruits *or* Advantages *of it; and in the laſt place preſcribe the* Method *by which it may be Attained.*

SECT.

SECT. I.

Of Perfection *in general. The Fruit of it. And the Way to obtain it.*

CHAP. I.

The Nature of Perfection *explained, and Aſſerted from Reaſon and Scripture.*

MOST Diſputes and Controverſies ariſe from Falſe and Miſtaken Notions of the Matter under Debate: And *ſo* I could ſhew it has happened here. Therefore to prevent Miſtakes, and cut off all occaſions of *Contention* (which ſerves only to defeat the Influence and Succeſs of Practical Diſcourſes) I think it neceſſary to begin here with a plain account *what* it is I mean by *Religious Perfection.*

Religion is nothing elſe but the purifying and refining Nature by Grace, the raiſing and exalting our Faculties and Capacities

by Wiſdom and Virtue. *Religious Perfection* therefore, is nothing elſe but the Moral Accompliſhment of Human Nature; ſuch a Maturity of Virtue as Man in this Life is capable of; *Converſion* begins, *Perfection* conſummates the Habit of Righteouſneſs: In the one, Religion is, as it were, in its Infancy; in the other, in its Strength and Manhood; ſo that *Perfection*, in ſhort, is nothing elſe, but a ripe and ſetled *Habit* of true *Holineſs*. According to this Notion of Religious *Perfection*, He is a *Perfect* Man whoſe *Mind* is pure and vigorous, and his *Body* tame and obſequious; whoſe *Faith* is firm and ſteady, his *Love* ardent and exalted, and his *Hope* full of Aſſurance; whoſe *Religion* has in it That Ardour and Conſtancy, and his *Soul* That Tranquility and Pleaſure, which beſpeaks him a Child of the *Light*, and of the *Day*, *a Partaker of the Divine Nature*, *and raiſed above the Corruption which is in the World through Luſt*.

This account of Religious *Perfection*, is ſo natural and eaſy, that I fancy no Man will demand a *Proof* of it; nor ſhould I go about one, were it not to ſerve ſome *further* Ends than the meer Confirmation of it. It has manifeſtly the countenance both of *Reaſon* and *Scripture*; And how contradictory ſoever ſome Ancient and Latter Schemes of

of *Perfection* ſeem to be, or really are, to one another; yet do they all agree in effect in what I have laid down. If we appeal to *Reaſon*, no Man can doubt, but that an *Habit* of Virtue has much more of Excellence and Merit in it, than ſingle accidental *Acts*, or uncertain Fits and Paſſions; ſince an *Habit* is not only the ſource and ſpring of the nobleſt Actions, and the moſt elevated Paſſions, but it renders us more regular and ſteady, more uniform and conſtant in every thing that is good. As to good natural *Diſpoſitions*, they have little of Strength, little of Perfection in them, till they be raiſed and improved into *Habits*. And for our *Natural Faculties*, they are nothing elſe, but the *Capacities* of Good or Evil; they are undetermined to the one or other, till they are fix'd and influenc'd by *Moral* Principles. It remains then, that Religious *Perfection* muſt conſiſt in an *Habit* of Righteouſneſs. And to prevent all impertinent Scruples and Cavils, I add a *Confirmed* and well eſtabliſhed one.

That this is the *Scripture* Notion of *Perfection*, is manifeſt; *Firſt*, From the uſe of this Word in Scripture. *Secondly*, From the Characters and Deſcriptions of the beſt and higheſt State which any ever actually attained, or to which we are invited and exhorted.

1. From the uſe of the Word: Whereever we find any mention of *Perfection* in *Scripture*, if we examine the place well, we ſhall find nothing more intended, than *Uprightneſs* and *Integrity*, an unblameable and unreproveable Life, a State well *advanced* in Knowledge and Virtue. Thus *Upright* and *Perfect* are uſed as terms equivalent, *Job* 1. *And that man was perfect and upright, fearing God and eſchewing evil*; and Pſalm 37. 37. *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright man, for the end of that man is peace.* Thus again, when God exhorts *Abraham* to *Perfection*, Gen. 17. 1. *I am the Almighty God; walk before me and be thou perfect*, all that he exhorts him to, is a ſteady *Obedience* to all his Commandments, proceeding from a lively Fear of, and Faith in him; and this is the general uſe of this word *Perfect*, throughout the *Old Teſtament*, namely, to ſignify a ſincere and juſt Man, that feareth God, and eſcheweth Evil, and is well fix'd and eſtabliſh'd in his Duty. In the *New Teſtament*, *Perfection* ſignifies the ſame thing which it does in the *Old*; that is, Univerſal Righteouſneſs, and Strength, and Growth in it. Thus the *Perfect* Man, 2 *Tim.* 3. 17. is one who is *throughly furniſhed to every good work.* Thus St. *Paul* tells us, *Coloſ* 4. 12, that *Epaphras laboured fervently in prayers for the Coloſſians, that*

that they might ſtand perfect and compleat in all the will of God. In *James* 1. 4. the *Perfect* Man is one, *Who is entire, lacking nothing*, i. e. one who is advanced to a *Maturity* of Virtue through Patience and Experience, and is fortified and eſtabliſhed in Faith, Love, and Hope. In *this* ſenſe of the word *Perfect*, St. *Peter* prays for thoſe to whom he writes his Epiſtle, 1 *Pet.* 5. 10. *But the God of all grace, who called us into his eternal glory by Chriſt Jeſus, after that ye have ſuffered a while, make you perfect, ſtabliſh, ſtrengthen, ſettle you.* When St. *Paul* exhorts the *Hebrews* to go on to *Perfection*, *Heb.* 6. he means nothing by it, but that ſtate of Manhood which conſiſts in a well ſetled *Habit* of Wiſdom and Goodneſs. This is plain, *firſt* from *ver.* 11, 12. of this *Chapter*, where he himſelf more fully explains his own meaning; *and we deſire that every one of you do ſhew the ſame diligen e, to the full aſſurance of hope* unto the *end*; *that ye be not ſlothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promiſe. Next* from the latter end of the 5th *Chapter*; where we diſcern *what* gave occaſion to his Exhortation; *there* diſtinguiſhing *Chriſtians* into two Claſſes, *Babes* and *Strong Men*, i. e. *Perfect* and *Imperfect*, he deſcribes *Both* at large thus: *For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye*

have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat; for every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe; but strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. And though here the Apostle seems more immediately to regard the *Perfection* of *Knowledge*, yet the *Perfection* of *Righteousness* must never, in the Language of the *Scripture*, be separated from it. Much the same Remark must I add concerning the *Integrity* of Righteousness, and the Christians Progress or Advance in it. *Though* the *Scripture*, when it speaks of *Perfection*, do sometimes more directly refer to the one, and sometimes to the other; *yet* we must ever suppose that they do mutually imply and include *one another*; since otherwise the Notion of *Perfection* would be extreamly maimed and incompleat. I'll insist therefore no longer on the use of the Words *Perfect* and *Perfection* in *Scripture:* But as a further Proof that my Notion of *Perfection* is truly *Scriptural*, I will shew,

2. That the utmost *Height*, to which the *Scripture* exhorts us, is nothing more than a steady *Habit* of Holiness; that the brightest

brighteſt *Characters* it gives of the *Perfect Man*, the loveliеſt *Deſcriptions* it make us of the *Perfecteſt State*, are all made up of the *Natural* and confeſſed *Properties* of a Ripe *Habit*. There is no Controverſy that I know of, about the *nature* of a *Habit*, every Man's Experience inſtructs him in the whole Philoſophy of it; We are all agreed, that it is a kind of *Second Nature*, that it makes us exert our ſelves with Deſire and Earneſtneſs, with Satisfaction and Pleaſure; that it renders us fix'd in our Choice, and conſtant in our Actions, and almoſt as averſe to thoſe things which are repugnant to it, as we are to thoſe which are diſtaſteful and diſagreeable to our Nature. And that, in a word, it ſo entirely and abſolutely poſſeſſes the Man, that the Power of it is not to be reſiſted, nor the Empire of it to be ſhaken off; nor can it be removed and extirpated without the greateſt Labour and Difficulty imaginable. All this is a confeſt and almoſt palpable Truth in *Habits of Sin*: And there is no reaſon why we ſhould not aſcribe the ſame Force and Efficacy to *Habits of Virtue*; eſpecially if we conſider that the ſtrength, eaſineſs, and pleaſure which belong *naturally* to *theſe Habits*, receive no ſmall *Acceſſion* from the *Supernatural* Energy and Vigour of the *Holy Spirit*. I will therefore in few words ſhew how that

State of Righteouſneſs which the *Scripture* invites us to, as our *Perfection*, directly anſwers this account I have given of an *Habit*.

Is *Habit* in *general* a ſecond *Nature?* This State of Righteouſneſs is in Scripture called *the New Man*, Epheſ. 4. 24. *the New Creature*, 2 Cor. 5. 17. *the Divine Nature*, 2 *Pet.* 1. 4. Does it conſequently *Rule* and *Govern* Man? Hear how St. *Paul* expreſſes this Power of the *Habit* of Holineſs in himſelf, *Gal.* 2. 20. *I am crucified with Chriſt; nevertheleſs I live, yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the fleſh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himſelf for me.* This is a conſtant Effect of *Habits*, and is equally diſcernable in Thoſe of *Vice* and *Virtue*, that they *ſway* and *govern* the Man they poſſeſs; *Rom.* 6. 16. *Know ye not, that to whom ye yield your ſelves ſervants to obey, his ſervants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of ſin unto death, or of obedience unto righteouſneſs?*

Shall I go on to a more diſtinct and particular Conſideration of the Properties of an Habit? The *firſt* is, a great *Averſion* for thoſe things which are *contrary* to it, or obſtruct us in the Exerciſe of it. And this is directly the Diſpoſition of the *Perfect* Man towards *Temptations* and *Sins*; he is now

now aſhamed of thoſe things which before he gloried in; he is filled with an Holy Indignation againſt thoſe things which before he took Pleaſure in; and what before he courted with Fondneſs and Paſſion, he now ſhuns with Fear and Vigilance. In brief, the *Scripture* deſcribes ſuch an one as poſſeſſed with an utter Hatred and Abhorrence of every Evil way, and as an irreconcilable Enemy to every thing that is an Enemy to his Virtue and his God. Thus Pſal. 119. 163. *I hate and abhor lying, but thy law do I love*; and *verſe* 128. *Therefore I eſteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every falſe way.* And this is a Genuine and Natural Effect of Integrity or Uprightneſs of Heart; whence 'tis the Obſervation of our *Saviour*, Matth. 6. 24. *No man can ſerve two maſters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or elſe he will hold to the one and deſpiſe the other.* And indeed every where a Hatred, a perfect Hatred of Evil, is accounted as a neceſſary Conſequence of the Love of God; *Pſal.* 37. 10. *Ye that love the Lord, hate Evil:* And therefore the *Pſalmiſt* reſolves to practiſe himſelf what he preſcribes to others; *Pſal.* 101. 2, 3. *I will behave my ſelf wiſely in a perfect way: O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my houſe with a perfect heart: I will ſet no wicked*

wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aſide, it ſhall not cleave to me. And how can this be otherwiſe? The Love of God muſt neceſſarily imply an Abhorrence of Evil; and that *Habit* which confirms and increaſes the one, muſt confirm and increaſe the other too.

2. The *Next* Property of an *Habit* is, That the *Actions* which flow from it are (if we meet not with violent oppoſition) performed with *Eaſe* and *Pleaſure:* What is *Natural*, is pleaſant and eaſy, and *Habit* is a *Second Nature.* When the love of Virtue, and the hatred of Vice have once rooted themſelves in the Soul, what can be more natural than to follow after the one, and ſhun the other? Since this is no more than embracing and enjoying what we love, and turning our backs on what we deteſt. This therefore is one conſtant Character of *Perfection* in *Scripture: Delight* and *Pleaſure* are every where ſaid to accompany the Practice of Virtue, when it is once grown up to Strength and Maturity: *The ways of wiſdom are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace,* Prov. 3. 17. *Perfect love caſteth out fear,* 1 Joh. 4. 18. And to him that loves, *the commandments of God are not grievous,* 1 Joh. 5. 3. Hence it is, that *the good Man's delight is in the Law of the Lord,* and that *he medi-*

meditates therein day and night, Pſal. 1. 2. Nor does he delight leſs in *Action* than *Meditation*, but grows in *Grace* as much as *Knowledge*; and abounds daily more and more in *Good Works*, as he increaſes in the *Comfort* of the *Holy Ghoſt*. Conſonant to *this* Property of *Perfection* it is, that in *Pſalm* 19. and 119. and elſewhere frequently, we hear the *Pſalmiſt* expreſſing a kind of inconceivable Joy and Tranſport in the Meditation and Practice of the Commands of God. So the firſt Chriſtians, who ſpent their Lives in Devotion, Faith, and Charity, are ſaid, *Acts* 2. 46. to have *eaten their meat with gladneſs and ſingleneſs of heart*. And 'tis a delightful Deſcription we have of the Apoſtles, 2 *Cor.* 6. 10. *as ſorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet poſſeſſing all things.*

3. *Vigor* and *Activity*, or much *Earneſtneſs* and *Application* of Mind, is a *Third* Property of an *Habit*. 'Tis impoſſible not to be intent upon thoſe things for which we have even an *Habitual* Paſſion, if this *Expreſſion* may be allowed me; an Inclination which has gathered Strength and Authority from Cuſtom, will exert it ſelf with ſome warmth and briskneſs. Now certainly there is nothing more frequently required of, or attributed to the *Perfect* Man in

in *Scripture*, than *Zeal* and *Fervency* of Spirit in the ways of God; and no wonder; for when Actions flow at once from Principles and Cuſtom; when they ſpring from Love, and are attended by Pleaſure, and are incited and quicken'd by Faith and Hope too; how can it be, but that we ſhould repeat 'em with ſome Eagerneſs, and feel an Holy Impatience as often as we are hinder'd or diſappointed? And as the nature of the thing ſhews, that thus it *ought* to be, ſo are there innumerable Inſtances in the *Old Teſtament* and the *New*, which make it evident that thus it *was*. Shall I mention the Example of our *Lord*, *who went about doing good*, Acts 10. 38.? Shall I propoſe the Labours and Travels of St. *Paul?* Theſe Patterns it may be will be judged by ſome too bright and dazling a Light for us to look on, or at leaſt too perfect for us to copy after; and yet St. *John* tells us, That *he who ſays he abides in him, ought himſelf alſo ſo to walk, even as he walked*, 1 John 2. 6. And we are exhorted to *be followers of the Apoſtles, as they were of Chriſt*. But if the Fervency of *Chriſt* and St. *Paul* ſeemed to have ſoar'd out of the reach of our Imitation, we have *Inferior* Inſtances enough, to prove the Zeal and Fruitfulneſs of *Habitual* Goodneſs. Thus *David* ſays of himſelf, *Pſal.* 119. 10. *With my*

my whole heart have I ſought thee. And *Joſiah*, 2 *Kings* 23. 25. is ſaid to have *turned to the Lord with all his ſoul, and with all his might.* How fervent was *Anna*, who *departed not from the temple, but ſerved God with faſtings and prayers night and day*, Luk. 2. 37.? How charitable *Tabitha*, who *was full of good works and almſdeeds which ſhe did*, Acts 9. 36.? Where ſhall I place *Cornelius?* With what words ſhall I ſet out his Virtues? With *what* but thoſe of the *Holy Ghoſt*, Acts 10. 2. *He was a devout man, and one that feared God with all his houſe, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.* But peradventure ſome may imagine, that there is ſomething ſingular and extraordinary in theſe Eminent Perſons, which we muſt never hope to equal; but muſt be content to follow them at a vaſt Diſtance. Well, let this be ſo; What have we to ſay to whole *Churches* animated by the ſame Spirit of Zeal? What are we to think of the *Churches* of *Macedonia*, whoſe *Charity* St. *Paul* thus magnifies, 2 *Cor.* 8. 2, 3. *In a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded to the riches of their liberality. For to their power I bear record, yea, and beyond their power, they were willing of themſelves.* And St. *Paul* declares himſelf *perſuaded* of the *Romans*, *that they were*

were full of goodneſs, filled with all knowledge; Rom. 15. 14. And of the *Corinthians* he teſtifies, *That they were enriched in every thing, and came behind in no gift*, 1 Cor. 1. 5, 6. *That they did abound in all things, in faith, in diligence*, &c. 2 Cor. 8. 7, I will ſtop here; 'tis in vain to heap up more Inſtances: I have ſaid enough to ſhew, That *Vigor* and *Fervency* in the Service of God, is no miraculous Gift, no extraordinary Prerogative of ſome peculiar Favourite of Heaven, but the natural and inſeparable *Property* of a well-confirmed *Habit* of Holineſs.

Laſtly; Is *Conſtancy* and *Steadineſs* the Property of an *Habit?* It is an undoubted Property of *Perfection* too. In *Scripture* Good Men are every where repreſented *as ſtanding faſt in the faith; ſtedfaſt and unmoveable in the works of God; holding faſt their integrity:* In one word, as conſtantly following after Righteouſneſs, and maintaining a good Conſcience towards God and Man. And ſo Natural is This to one *Habitually* good, that St. *John* affirms of ſuch a one, *that he cannot ſin*; 1 Joh. 3. 9. *Whoſoever is born of God, doth not commit ſin, for his ſeed remaineth in him, and he cannot ſin, becauſe he is born of God.* Accordingly, *Job* is ſaid *to have feared God, and eſchewed evil*; which muſt be underſtood

ſtood of the conſtant courſe of his Life. *Zachary* and *Elizabeth* are ſaid to be *righteous, walking in all the commandments of God blameleſs*, Luk. 1. 6. *Enoch*, *Noah*, *David*, and other excellent Perſons, who are pronounc'd by God *Righteous*, and *Juſt*, and *Perfect*, are ſaid in *Scripture*, *To walk with God, to ſerve him with a perfect heart, with a full purpoſe of heart to cleave to him*, and the like. And this is that *Conſtancy* which *Chriſtians* are often exhorted to; *Watch ye, ſtand faſt in the faith, quit ye like men, be ſtrong*, 1 Cor. 16. 13. And of which the firſt Followers of our *Lord* left us ſuch remarkable *Examples*. The *Diſciples* are ſaid to have been continually in the Temple, *bleſſing and praiſing God*, Luk. 24. And the *firſt Chriſtians* are ſaid to *have continued ſtedfaſtly in the Apoſtles doctrine and fellowſhip, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers*, Acts 2. 42.

Thus I think I have ſufficiently cleared my Notion of *Perfection* from *Scripture*: Nor need I multiply more Texts, to prove what I think no man can doubt of, unleſs he miſtake the main Deſign and End of the *Goſpel*; which is to raiſe and exalt us to a ſteady *Habit* of Holineſs: *The end of the commandment*, ſaith St. *Paul*, 1 Tim. 1. 5. *is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conſcience, and of faith unfeigned.* This is the

the utmoſt *Perfection* Man is capable of, to have his Mind enlightned, and his Heart purified; and to be inform'd, acted, and influenc'd by Faith and Love, as by a vital Principle: And all this is eſſential to *Habitual* Goodneſs.

If any one deſire *further* Light or Satisfaction in this Matter, let him read the Eighth *Chapter* to the *Romans*, and he will ſoon acknowledge, that he there finds the ſubſtance of what I have hitherto advanced. *There*, though the *Word* it ſelf be not found, the *Thing* called *Perfection* is deſcribed in all the Strength and Beauty, in all the Pleaſure and Advantages of it: There the Diſciple of *Jeſus* is repreſented as one *who walks not after the fleſh, but after the ſpirit*; as one *whom the law of the ſpirit of life in Chriſt Jeſus has ſet free from the law of ſin and death*; one who ὁ φρονῶν, *does not mind or reliſh the things of the fleſh, but the things of the Spirit*; one *in whom the Spirit of Chriſt dwells*: He does not ſtand at the Door, and knock; he does not make a tranſient viſit; but here he reigns, and rules, and inhabits: One finally, in whom *the body is dead becauſe of ſin, but the ſpirit is life becauſe of righteouſneſs*. And the Reſult of all this is the Joy and Confidence, the Security and Tranſport that becomes the Child of God. *Ye have not received*

ved the ſpirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the ſpirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father. The Spirit it ſelf beareth witneſs with our ſpirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Chriſt. And now 'tis no wonder, if the *Perfect* Man *long for the revelation of the glory of the ſons of God*; if he cry out in Rapture, *If God be for me, who can be againſt me? Who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? Who ſhall ſeparate me from the love of Chriſt?* and ſo on. If any one would ſee the *Perfect* Man deſcribed in *Fewer* words, he needs but caſt his eye on *Rom. 6. 22. But now being made free from ſin, and become ſervants to God, ye have your fruit unto holineſs, and the end everlaſting life.*

CHAP. II.

This Notion of Perfection countenanced by all ſides.

AFter I have ſhewed that this Notion of *Perfection* is warranted by *Reaſon* and *Scripture*; I ſee not why I ſhould be very ſolicitous whether it do or do not claſh with the *Opinions* of Men. But the truth

is, if we examine not ſo much the *Expreſſions* and *Words*, as the *Senſe* and *Meaning* of all *Parties* about this Matter, we ſhall find them well enough *agreed* in it at the bottom. And 'tis no wonder, if (notwithſtanding ſeveral incidental *Diſputes*) they ſhould yet agree in the *Main*: Since the Experience of Mankind does eaſily teach us *what* ſort of *Perfection* Human *Nature* is capable of; and what can, or cannot actually be attained by *Man*. The *Pelagians* did not contend for an *Angelical Perfection*, nor St. *Auſtin* deny *ſuch* a one as was truly *ſuitable to Man*: The *one* could not be ſo far a Stranger to *Human Nature*, as to exempt it in reality from thoſe Errors and Defects which the beſt of men complain of, and labour againſt. Nor was St. *Auſtin* ſo little acquainted with the *Power* of *the Goſpel*, and of the *Spirit*, as not to be well enough aſſured that Man might be *Habitually* Good; and that ſuch were influenced and acted by a firm Faith, and a fervent Love, and well-grounded Hope. The *Diſpute* between Them then, concerning *Perfection*, did not conſiſt in *This*, Whether Men might be *Habitually* good? This was in reality *acknowledg'd* on *Both* ſides: Nor, Whether the Beſt Men were ſubject to Defects? For *This* too *Both* ſides could not but be ſenſible of: But in theſe

theſe *two things* eſpecially; *Firſt*, *What* was to be attributed to *Grace*, *what* to *Nature?'* And this relates not to the *Definition* or *Eſſence* of *Perfection*, but to the *Source* and *Origine* of it. *Secondly*, Whether thoſe *Irregular* Motions, Defects, and Errors, to which the beſt Men were ſubject, were to be accounted *Sins*, or not? Neither the one ſide nor the other then, as far as I can diſcern, did in truth miſtake the Nature of *Human Perfection*: Each placed it in *Habitual* Righteouſneſs; the one contended for no *more*, nor did the other contend for *leſs* in the *Perfect* Man. And when the *one* aſſerted him free from *Sin*, he did not aſſert him free from *Defects*: And while the *other* would not allow the beſt Man to be without *Sin*, they did not by *Sin* underſtand any thing elſe, but ſuch *Diſorders*, *Oppoſitions* to, or *Deviations* from the Law of *God*, as the *Pelagian* himſelf muſt needs own to be in the *Perfect* Man. The Diſpute then was not *what* Man might or might not attain to; for Both ſides agreed him capable of the ſame *Habitual* Righteouſneſs; Both ſides allowed him ſubject to the ſame *Frailties*: But *one* ſide would have theſe *Frailties* accounted *Sins*, and the *other* would *not*.

Numerous indeed have been the Controverſies between the *Popiſh* and *Reformed*

Churches, about *Precept* and *Counſel*, *Mortal* and *Venial* Sin, the *Poſſibility* of fulfilling the Law of *God*, the *Merit* of Good Works, and ſuch like. But after all, if we enquire what that *Height* of *Virtue* is, to which the beſt of Men may arrive; what thoſe *Frailties* and *Infirmities* are, to which they are ſubject; 'twere I think eaſy to ſhew, that the Wiſe and Good are on all hands *agreed* about this. Nor does it much concern my preſent purpoſe, in what ſenſe, or on what account *Papiſts* think ſome Sins Venial, and *Proteſtants* deny them to be ſo; ſince neither the one nor the other exempt the *Perfect* Man from *Infirmities*, nor aſſert any other *Height* or *Perfection*, than what conſiſts in a conſummate and well-eſtabliſh'd *Habit* of Virtue. Some Men may and do talk very extravagantly; but it is very hard to imagine that Sober and Pious Men ſhould run in with them. *Such*, when they talk of *Fulfilling* the Law of *God*, and keeping his Commandments, muſt ſurely underſtand this of the Law of *God* in a *Gracious* and *Equitable* ſenſe: And this is no more than what the *Scripture* aſſerts of every ſincere *Chriſtian*. When they talk of I know not what tranſcendent *Perfection* in *Monkery*, they muſt ſurely mean nothing more, than that Poverty, Chaſtity, and Obedience, are *Heroick* Inſtances of Faith

Faith and Love, of Poverty of Spirit, and Purity of Heart; and that an *Aſcetick* Diſcipline is the moſt compendious and effectual way to a conſummate *Habit* of Righteouſneſs. *Finally*, By the Diſtinction of *Precept* and *Counſel*, ſuch can never intend ſurely more than This, That we are obliged to *ſome* things under pain of Damnation; to *others*, by the Hopes of greater Degrees of Glory: For 'tis not eaſy for me to comprehend, that any Man, whoſe Judgment is not enſlav'd to the Dictates of his *Party*, ſhould deny *either* of theſe *two* Truths. 1. That whatever is neither forbidden nor commanded by any Law of God, is *Indifferent*. 2. That no Man can do more than love the *Lord* his *God* with all his Heart, with all his Soul, and with all his Might, and his Neighbour as himſelf. I ſay, there is no Degree or Inſtance of *Obedience*, that is not compriſed within the *Latitude* and *Perfection* of theſe Words. But whatever ſome of the *Church* of *Rome*, or it may be the greater part of it may think; This, 'tis plain was the Senſe of the *Ancients*. St. *Auſtin (a)* could never underſtand any Merit or Excellence in thoſe things that were matter of Counſel, not Precept, unleſs

(a) *Quæcunque non jubentur, ſed ſpeciali conſilio* monentur, *tum rectè fiunt, cum referuntur ad diligendum Deum, & proximum propter Deum*, Aug. Ench. cap. 121.

they flowed from, and had regard to the Love of God and our Neighbour. And *Cassian*'s *(b)* Excellent *Monks* resolved all the value of such things to consist in their tendency to promote Apostolical Purity and Charity. And *Gregory Nazianzen (c)* thought it very extravagant, to pretend to be *Perfecter* than the *Rule*, and *Exacter* than the *Law*.

(b) *Ac proinde ea quibusqualitates statutas videmus, & tempora; & quæ sic observata sanctificant, ut omissa non polluant,* Media *esse manifestum est, ut puta Nuptias, agriculturam, divitias, solitudinis Remotionem,* &c. Cassian. Colla. Patr. *Talem igitur Definitionem supra Jejunii,* &c. *Nec in ipso spei nostræ terminum defigamus, sed ut per ipsum ad puritatem Cordis & Apostolicam Charitatem pervenire possimus;* Ibid.

(c) Μηδὲ τοῦ νόμου νομιμώτερος, μηδὲ λαμπρότερος τοῦ Φωτὸς, μηδὲ τοῦ κανόνος εὐθύτερος, μηδὲ τῆς ἐντολῆς ὑψηλότερος. Greg. Nazian.

The *Quakers* have made much noise and stir about the Doctrine of *Perfection*, and have reflected very severely on others, as subverting the great Design of our Redemption (which is deliverance from Sin) and upholding the Kingdom of Darkness: But with what *Justice*, will easily appear when I have represented their *Sense*, which I will do very *Impartially*, and in as few and plain words as I can. Mr. *W. P. (d)* tells us, *That They are so far Infallible and Perfect, as they are led by the Spirit.* This is indeed *true*, but 'tis mere *trifling*: For *This* is an *Infallibility* and *Perfection* which no man denies, who believes in the *Holy Ghost*;

(d) A Key opening, &c.

Ghoſt; ſince whoever follows *His* Guidance muſt be in the right, unleſs the *Holy Ghoſt* himſelf be in the wrong? He urges, 'tis true, a great number of *Scriptures* to *ſhew* (they are his own words) *that a State of Perfection from Sin (though not in fulneſs of Wiſdom and Glory) is attainable in this Life*; But this is too dark and ſhort a hint to infer the Senſe of his *Party* from it. Mr. *Ed. Burroughs (e)* is more full: *We believe* (ſaith he) *that the Saints upon Earth may receive forgiveneſs of Sins, and may be perfectly freed from the Body of Sin and Death, and in Chriſt may be perfect and without Sin, and may have victory over all Temptations, by Faith in Jeſus Chriſt. And we believe every Saint that is called of God, ought to preſs after Perfection, and to overcome the Devil, and all his Temptations upon Earth: And we believe they that faithfully wait for it, ſhall obtain it, and ſhall be preſented without Sin in the Image of the Father; And ſuch walk not after the Fleſh, but after the Spirit, and are in Covenant with God, and their ſins are blotted out, and remembred no more; for they ceaſe to commit ſin, being Born of the Seed of God.* If by *Sin* here, he means, as he ſeems to do, *Deliberate* or *Preſumptuous* Sin; I do not think any Eſtabliſh'd *Church*, whether *Proteſtant* or *Popiſh*, Teaches otherwiſe. Mr. *Barclay (f)* goes

(e) Principles of Truth &c.

(f) Apol. Teſt. 8.

goes very *Methodically* to work, and *firſt* ſets down the ſtate of the Queſtion; *then* confutes *thoſe* that differ from Him; anſwers their Objections out of *Scripture*; and *laſtly*, eſtabliſhes his own Doctrine. As to the *Perfection* which he aſſerts, he lets us know, That it is to be derived from the *Spirit* of *Chriſt*; that it conſiſts not in an Impoſſibility of Sinning, but a Poſſibility of not Sinning; And that his *Perfect* Man is capable of daily Growth and Improvement. When to This I have added, that he ſpeaks all along of *That* which we call *Wilful Sin*, as appears from his Deſcription of *it*; for he calls it, *Iniquity*, *Wickedneſs*, *Impurity*, the *Service* of *Satan*, and attributes ſuch Effects to it as belong not at all to what we call *Sins* of *Infirmity*; when, I ſay, *This* is added to render his Senſe *clear*, I can readily ſubſcribe to him: For I know no ſuch Doctrines in our *Church* as Thoſe which he there oppoſes; namely, that the *Regenerate* are to live in *Sin*, and that their *Good Works* are *Impure* and *Sinful*. But then, he either miſtakes the Main Point in Debate, or prudently declines it: For the Queſtion is not, Whether good Men may live in *Mortal* or *Wilful Sin*, but whether good Men are not ſubject to *Frailties* and *Infirmities*, which are indeed *Sins*, though not *imputable* under the Cove-

Covenant of *Grace?* Whether the *Quakers* are not in this Point *Pelagians*, I do not now enquire; becauſe if they be, they are already conſidered. Two things there are in Mr. *Barclay*'s ſtate of the Queſtion, which I cannot ſo well approve of; the *One* is, that he expreſſes himſelf ſo injudiciouſly about the growth and improvement of his *Perfect* Man, that he ſeems to forget the Difference the *Scriptures* make between *Babes* and full *Grown* Men in *Chriſt*, and to place Perfection ſo low in reference to *Poſitive* Righteouſneſs, or Virtue, as if it conſiſted in *Negative* only, or ceaſing from Sin. The *Other* is, That though he does not peremptorily *affirm* a State of *Impeccability* attainable in this Life, yet he ſeems inclined to *Believe* it, and imagines it countenanced by 1 *John* 3. 9. But he ought to have conſider'd, That whatever *Impeccability* may be inferr'd from that *Text*, it is attributed, not to ſome extraordinary Perſons, but to all whoſoever they be that are Born of *God*; but this is out of my way. All that I am to obſerve upon the whole is, that Theſe Men place *Perfection* eſpecially in refraining from *Sin*: I advance *higher*, and place it in a well-ſetled *Habit* of Righteouſneſs. And I believe they will be as little diſſatisfied with me for this, as I am with them, for aſſert-

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ing the Perfect Man freed from Sin. For as Mr. *Barclay* expreſſes himſelf, I think he has in reality no Adverſaries but *Antinomians* and *Ranters*.

As to That Perfection which is magnified by *Myſtical* Writers, ſome of Them have only darken'd and obſcured the plain ſenſe of the *Goſpel*, by figurative and unintelligible Terms. *Thoſe* of them which write with more life and heat than other Men ordinarily do, recommend nothing but that *Holineſs* which begins in the *Fear*, and is conſummate in the *Love* of God; which enlightens the Mind, purifies the Heart, and fixes and unites Man to his ſovereign Good, that is, *God*: And I am ſure I ſhall not differ with *Theſe*.

There are, I confeſs, almoſt innumerable ſayings of the *Fathers* which ſufficiently teſtify how little Friends they were to *Perfection*, in ſuch a Notion of it as is too generally embraced in the Church of *Rome*. The *Primitive* Spirit breathed nothing but *Humility*: It was a profeſſed Enemy to all ſelf-Confidence and Arrogance, to Supererogation and Merit; and it invited Men earneſtly to reflect upon the *ſins* and *ſlips* of Life, and on that *Oppoſition* which the Law of the *Body* maintains againſt the Law of the *Mind*, in ſome degree or other, in the *Beſt* Men. This Conſideration forced the

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Biſhop of *Condome* to that plain and honeſt *Confeſſion*, *Itaque Juſtitia noſtra licet per Charitatis Infuſionem ſit vera, &c. Though our Righteouſneſs, becauſe of that Love which the Spirit ſheds abroad in our hearts, be ſincere and real, yet is it not abſolute and conſummate, becauſe of the oppoſition of Concupiſcence: So that it is an indiſpenſable Duty of Chriſtianity, to be perpetually bewailing the errors of life: Wherefore we are oblig'd humbly to confeſs with St.* Auſtin, *That our Righteouſneſs in this Life, conſiſts rather in the pardon of our Sins, than in the perfection of our Virtues.* All this is undoubtedly true, but concerns not me: I never dream of any man's paſſing the courſe of Life *without Sin*: Nor do I contend for ſuch a *Perfection* as St. *Auſtin* calls *Abſolute*, which will admit of no Increaſe, and is exempt from Defects and Errors. Though on the *other* hand, I confeſs, I cannot but think, ſome carry this matter too far; and while they labour to abate the *Pride* and *Confidence* of man, give too much encouragement to *Negligence* and *Preſumption*. I cannot ſee how frequent Relapſes into *Deliberate* Acts of Wickedneſs, can conſiſt with a well ſetled and eſtabliſh'd *Habit* of Goodneſs. The heat of Diſpute in ſome, and a ſort of *Implicite* Faith for their *Authority* in others, has produced many *unwary Expreſſions*, and

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I doubt very *unſound* and pernicious *Notions* about this matter.

CHAP. III.

Inferences deduced from the Notion of Perfection.

HAving in the *two former* Chapters fix'd the Notion of Religious *Perfection*, and prov'd it conſonant to *Reaſon* and *Scripture*, and not ſo only, but alſo made it appear, that it is countenanced by the Unanimous *Conſent* of *All*, who have ever handled This Subject. I have nothing now to do, but by way of *Inference* to repreſent the *Advantages* we may reap from it.

1. It is from hence plain, That *Perfection* muſt not be placed in Fantaſtick Speculations, or Voluntary Obſervances, but in the ſolid and uſeful *Virtues* of the *Goſpel*; in the Works of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope; in the Purity and Humility of a Child of Light; in the Conſtancy and Magnanimity which becomes one who has brought the Body into ſubjection, and has ſet his Affections on things above. *This* ſtate of *Perfection* is well

well enough deſcribed by the *Rule* of St. *Bennet*. *Ergo his omnibus Humilitatis Gradibus aſcenſis, Monachus mox ad Charitatem, &c. The Monk having paſſed through theſe ſeveral Stages of Humility or Mortification, will arrive at that Love of God which caſteth out Fear; by which he will be enabled to perform all things with Eaſe and Pleaſure, and, as it were, Naturally, which before he perform'd with Reluctancy and Dread; being now moved and acted, not by the terrors of Hell, but by a delight in Goodneſs, and the force of an excellent Habit: Both which, Chriſt by his Spirit vouchſafes to increaſe and exalt in his Servant now cleans'd and purg'd from all Sin and Vice.*

2. This Notion of *Perfection* proves all Men to lie under an *Obligation* to it: For as All are *capable* of an *Habit* of Holineſs, ſo is it the Duty of All to *endeavour* after it. If *Perfection* were indeed an *Angelical* State; if it did conſiſt in an Exemption from all Defects and Infirmities, and in ſuch an Elevation of Virtue, to which nothing can be added; *then* I confeſs, all *Diſcourſes* of it, and much more all *Attempts* after it, would be vain and inſolent too. *If* again, it did conſiſt in ſome *Heroick* Pitch of Virtue, which ſhould appear to have ſome thing ſo *ſingular* in it, as ſhould make it look more like a *Miracle* than a *Duty*, it

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were *then* to be expected but once in an *Age*, from ſome *Extraordinary* Perſon, called to it by Peculiar *Inſpirations*, and Extraordinary *Gifts*. But if *Chriſtian Perfection* be, as I have proved, only a well confirmed *Habit* of Goodneſs, if it differ from *Sincerity* only, when *Sincerity* is in its *Weakneſs* and *Infancy*, not when *grown* up, then 'tis plain, that *every Chriſtian* lies under an *Obligation* to *it*. Accordingly the *Scripture* exhorts All *to perfect holineſs in the fear of God, to go on to perfection*, Heb. 6. and it aſſigns this as one great end of the inſtitution of a ſtanding *Miniſtry* in the *Churches* of *Chriſt*, namely, *the perfecting the ſaints, the edifying the body of Chriſt*; *till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt*, Epheſ. 4. 12, 13. And hence it is, that we find the *Apoſtles* purſuing this great End, by their *Prayers* and *Labours*, earneſtly contending and endeavouring to preſent all Chriſtians *Perfect* before *God*, 1 Theſſ. 3. 10. *Night and day praying exceedingly, that we might ſee your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith*, Coloſ. 1. 28. *Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wiſdom, that we may preſent every man perfect in Chriſt Jeſus*, ſee 1 *Pet.* 5. 10. *Coloſ.* 4. 13. Nay further, the

the *Scripture* frequently puts us in mind, that they are in a State of *Danger*, who do not *proceed* and *grow* in Grace, and preſs on towards *Perfection*. Now all this is very eaſily accountable, taking *Perfection* for a well ſetled *Habit* of Holineſs; but on no *other* Notion of it.

3. This Account of *Perfection* removes *thoſe Scruples* which are often ſtarted about the *Degrees* of Holineſs and *Meaſures* of Duty, and are wont to diſturb the Peace, clog the Vigour, and damp the Alacrity of many well-meaning and good People. Nay, many of acute Parts and good Learning, are often puzled about this Matter: Some teaching, that Man is not bound to do his beſt; others on the quite contrary, that he is ſo far bound to it, that he is always oblig'd to *purſue* the moſt *Perfect Duty*, to *chuſe* the moſt *Perfect* Means, and to exert the *utmoſt* of that *Strength*, and act according to the *utmoſt* of that *Capacity* with which God has endowed him. Now all theſe things, when we come to apply theſe *General* Doctrines to *Particular* Inſtances, and a vaſt variety of *Circumſtances*, have ſo much *Latitude*, Ambiguity, and Uncertainty in them, that Men of *Tender* Conſciences, and *Defective* Underſtanding, reap nothing from ſuch high-flown *Indefinite* Diſcourſes, but *Doubts* and *Scruples*.

Scruples. It requires a ſtrong and penetrating Judgment to reſolve what is the utmoſt *Extent* of our Power and Capacity; *What* the *beſt* Mean, and what the *moſt perfect* Duty, when *many* preſent themſelves to us, and all *variouſly* circumſtantiated. But now, as I have ſtated Matters, we are bound indeed to purſue and labour after *Growth* and *Improvement* in the Love of God, and Charity towards our Neighbour, in Purity, Humility, and the like. And this we ſhall certainly do, if we be *Sincere*; in other Matters we are left to our *Prudence*, and if the Error of our *Choice* proceed only from an Error in *Judgment*, not a *Corruption* in our *Hearts*, we are *ſafe* enough.

4. 'Tis very eaſy to *diſcern* now *where* we ſtand in reference to *Perfection*; how *remote* we are from it, or how *near* to it. For the *nature* of an *Habit* being plain and intelligible, the *Effects* and *Properties* of it, obvious to the Meaneſt Capacity, 'tis *eaſy* to determine upon an Impartial *Examination*, whether we be *Habitually* Good or not, or what *Approaches* we have made towards it. And becauſe this is a Matter of no ſmall *Importance*, and Men are generally backward enough to advance too far into ſuch *Reflections* and *Applications*, as may breed any *Diſturbance* to their *Peace*, or any

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Diminution of their Good *Opinion* for *themſelves*, though neither the one nor the other be too well grounded; I ſhall not think my time miſ-ſpent, if I here take this task upon me; and endeavour by ſeveral *Particular* deductions, to lay every Man's *State* as plainly open to his *View* as I can.

1. Then, from the Notion I have given of *Perfection*, it appears, That *if* a Man's Life be very *Uneven*, Unconſtant, and Contradictory to it ſelf; if he be to day a *Saint*, and to morrow a *Sinner*; if he yield to day to the Motives of the *Goſpel*, and Impulſes of the *Spirit*, and to morrow to the Sollicitations of the *Fleſh*, and Temptations of the *World*, he is far from being *Perfect*; ſo far, that there is not ground enough to conclude him *Sincere* or *Real*, though *Imperfect* Convert. The only certain Proof of *Regeneration* is Victory; *he that is born of God, overcometh the World*, 1 Joh. 5.4. *Faith*, though it be *True*, is not preſently *Saving* and *Juſtifying* till it have ſubdued the *Will*, and captivated the *Heart*, *i. e.* till we begin to *Live* by *Faith*; which is evident from *That* Corn in the *Parable*, which though it ſhot up, yet had it not *Depth* of Earth, nor *Root* enough, and therefore was *withered* up, and brought forth *no* fruit. Regret and Sorrow for Sin is an Excellent Paſſion, but till it has ſubdued our Corrupti-

ons, chang'd our Affections, and purified our Hearts, 'tis not that *Saving* Repentance in the Apoſtle, 2 *Cor.* 7. 10. *Godly ſorrow worketh Repentance, not to be repented of.* We may have ſudden Heats and Paſſions for Virtue; but if they be too ſhort liv'd to implant it in us, this is *not* that *Charity* or *Love* which animates and impregnates the New Creature mentioned, *Gal.* 5. 6. *Faith working by Love.* Laſtly, we may have good Purpoſes, Intentions, nay, Reſolutions; but if theſe prove too weak to obtain a *Conqueſt* over our *Corruptions*, if they prove too weak to reſiſt the *Temptations* we were wont to fall by, 'tis plain that they are not ſuch as can demonſtrate us *Righteous*, or entitle us to a *Crown*, which is promiſed to him that *overcometh.* And here I cannot but remark, to how little purpoſe *Controverſies* have been multiplied about the *Juſtification* of Man. 'Tis *one* thing for *God* to *juſtify* us, *i. e.* to *Pardon* our *Sins*, and account us *Righteous*, and *his* Children; and *another* for us to *know*, or be *aſſured* that he does ſo. If we enquire after the *former*, 'tis plain to me that no Man can be *accounted* Righteous by *God*, till he really *is* ſo: And when the Man is *Sanctified* throughout in Spirit, Soul, and Body; then is he certainly *Juſtified*, and not till then. And this I think is confeſſed by

by all except *Antinomians*; and whatever *Difference* there is amongſt *Chriſtians* in this Matter', it lies in the Forms and Variety of *Expreſſion.* They that contend earneſtly for the Neceſſity of *Good works*, do not, I ſuppoſe, imagine, that the *Works* are Holy, before the *Heart* is ſo; for as is the *Fountain*, ſuch will be its *Streams*; as is the *Tree*, ſuch will be its *Fruits.* What Abſurdity then is there in admitting that Men are juſtified before they bring forth Good Works; if they cannot bring forth Good Works till they be Sanctified and Chang'd? On the other hand, they who contend ſo earneſtly for *Juſtification* by *Faith* without *Works*, do not only ſuppoſe that the Man is throughly changed, by the *Infuſion* of *Habitual Grace*, but alſo that this Grace as ſoon as it has opportunity, will exert and expreſs it ſelf in *good Works*: And they do readily acknowledge that the *Faith* which does *not* work by *Love*, is an *Hiſtorical* Unanimated *Faith.* And if ſo, how natural is it to compriſe in that Holineſs which *juſtifies*, not only the change of the *Heart*, but of the *Actions?* But here I think it is well worth the conſidering, whether that thorough *Change* in the *nature* of a Sinner, which is called *Holineſs*, be now effected at *once*, and in a *moment*, and not rather *gradually* and in *time?* For this may

give ſome light to the Doctrine of *Juſtification*, and draw us off from Speculations and Theories, to more Uſeful and Practical Thoughts and Diſcourſes about it. 'Tis true, in the *Primitive* times, when the Conviction of a Sinner was wrought by a dazling light, by Surpriſing Miracles, by Exuberant Influxes of the *Spirit*, and the Concurrence of many extraordinary things, *Sanctification* (as in the *Goaler* and his *Family*, Act. 16.) might be *begun* and *finiſhed* in the *ſame* hour. But I doubt it is *rarely* ſo with us at *this* day; our Vices are not ſo ſuddenly ſubdued, nor our Virtues ſo ſuddenly implanted. *Our* Convictions in the Beginning of Converſion, are ſeldom ſo full and clear as *Theirs*: And if we may judge by the *Effects*, 'tis but ſeldom that the Principle of a New Life is infus'd in the *ſame* Plenty and Power it appears to have been in *Them*. And if ſo, then theſe things will follow; 1. Though in the firſt *Plantation* of the *Goſpel* Men being converted, as it were in a *Moment*, ingrafted by *Baptiſm* into *Chriſt*, and receiving the *Holy Ghoſt*, the *Earneſt* of their *Juſtification* or Acceptance with *God*, and their future *Glory*: We may very well ſay of them, that they were not only *Juſtified*, but alſo *knew* themſelves to be ſo, *before* they had brought forth any other *Fruit* of Righte-

Righteouſneſs, than what was implied in the *Dedication* of themſelves to *Chriſt* by that ſolemn Rite of *Baptiſm*; but at *this* day, when Converſion is not effected in the ſame manner; when Faith and Good Works do mutually cheriſh one another; when Righteouſneſs is not brought forth into Victory, but by *long* labour and travel; I ſee not why *Faith* and *Good Works* may not be pronounced *jointly* and *antecedently* neceſſary to our *Juſtification*. 2. The Doctrine of *Infuſed Habits* has been much ridiculed and expoſed, as abſurd by ſome Men; and I muſt confeſs, if it be *Eſſential* to a *Habit*, to be acquired by length of time, and repetition of the ſame Acts, then an *Infus'd Habit* is a very *Odd* Expreſſion: But why *God* cannot produce in us thoſe ſtrong Diſpoſitions to Virtue in a *Moment*, which are *naturally* produced by *Time*; or why *we* may not aſcribe as much efficacy to *Infus'd Grace*, as *Philoſophers* are wont to do to *repeated Acts*, I cannot ſee? Nor can I ſee why ſuch *Diſpoſitions* when *Infus'd*, may not be called *Habits*, if they have all the *Properties* and *Effects* of an Habit. And that ſuch excellent Diſpoſitions *were* on a ſudden wrought in the Minds of Chriſtians in the beginning of Chriſtianity, is too plain from the Hiſtory of thoſe times to need a proof. But whether ſuch

changes are ordinarily effected ſo ſuddenly at *this* day, we have much reaſon to *doubt*; nay, I think it appears from what I have ſaid, there is ſufficient reaſon to *deny* it. And if ſo, the *Infuſion* of *Habits* cannot be ſo properly inſiſted on *now* as *then*; and *we* may be more ſubject to make *unwarrantable* Inferences from the Doctrine of *Infus'd Habits*, than *they* were in thoſe bright and *Miraculous* days. 3. As our *Progreſs* to *Sanctification* muſt be *ſlower* than formerly, as it muſt be *longer* before the Grace that is infus'd ſo far, maſter our Corruption, and dilate and diffuſe it ſelf through our whole Nature, as that we may juſtly be denominated *Holy* and *Righteous* from the Prevalence of this Holy Principle: So by a neceſſary conſequence, our *Juſtification* muſt commence *later*. But after all, I know not why we ſhould be ſo inquiſitive after the *time* of our *Juſtification* by *God*. The *Comfort* of a Chriſtian does not reſult immediately from *God's Juſtifying* him, but from *his knowing* that he does ſo. And if this be the thing we are now ſearching after, namely, what rational *Aſſurance* we can have of our *Juſtification*, and when, as indeed it is; then, though I do not pretend to determine, that Man *is* not, or *may* not be Juſtifi'd or accounted righteous by *God*, upon a thorough change of Mind or Soul, before

fore this change *discovers* it self in a Series of *Victories* over those *Temptations* by which he was led *Captive* before; Yet I assert *First*, That the true and solid proof of the *Sanctification* of the *Heart*, is *Sanctity* of Life. *Next*, when I talk of *Victory*, I suppose Man *engag'd*, I suppose him *encountred* by *Temptations* and *Enemies*; and *then* I affirm, that the *Faith* which is not strong enough to *Conquer*, is not strong enough to *Justify*. If any Man demand, May not that Faith which is Foil'd to *day*, Conquer to *morrow*? I answer, I must leave this to *God*: I can pronounce nothing of the *Sincerity* of the Heart, but by the outward *Deportment* and *Success*. And if this be the proper way of judging of a Man's Sincerity, I am sure I may with much more confidence affirm, that nothing less than *Victory* can be a clear Argument of *Perfection*. My business therefore shall ever be to be *Holy*, and then I'm *sure* I shall be *Justified*. If *I be* Holy, *God* who cannot err will certainly *account* me so; and if I *cease* to *be* so, *God* must *cease* to *account* me so. And this is all which I design by this long Paragraph: That is, to render Men more careful and diligent in making their Calling and Election sure, and to prevent Presumption and groundless Confidence. And that nothing that I have here *said* may be

perverted to a *contrary* purpoſe; that no man from ſome paſſionate reſolutions or ſudden changes of his own Mind, may be tempted to conclude too *haſtily* of his being *Juſtified*, as if the change wrought in him, were equal to that commonly effected in the *firſt* Converts of *Chriſtianity*; I think it not amiſs to put ſuch a one in mind, that even *Theſe* were not Juſtified, unleſs they did *profeſs Chriſt* with the *Mouth* as well as *Believe* in him with the *Heart*; and that this *publick* Profeſſion of Chriſtianity in *thoſe* days, was equivalent to *many* Good Works in *Theſe*.

2dly. He that feels in himſelf little or no Fervency of Spirit, little or no Hunger and Thirſt after Righteouſneſs, has reaſon to ſuſpect, that his *Regularity* is little more than common *Decency* and *Civility*, and to doubt, leſt his *Religion* be nothing elſe but *Cuſtom* or common *Prudence*. I ſee not *how* ſo much *Indifference* and *Sluggiſhneſs* can conſiſt with a firm *Belief* and *Expectation* of a *Crown*, with a ſincere *Love* of *God* and *Righteouſneſs*. But if we may ſuppoſe ſuch a one reſtrained from Evil, and preſerved in the way of Duty, after a ſort, by the *Fear* of *God*, and a *Deſire* of *Heaven*, yet certainly this can be but the *Infancy* of the *New Creature* at moſt: And the beſt advice that can be given ſuch a one, is ſurely that of St. *Peter*, that by *adding one degree of vir-*

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tue to another, he would uſe all diligence to make his calling and election ſure, 2 Pet. 1, 10.

3dly. If a man's Religion produce very *few* Good Works, or ſuch only as put him to little travel or expence, we may conclude, that this man is not *Perfect*; his Charity is too weak, too narrow to be that of an *exalted* Chriſtian: The beſt that we can think of ſuch a one is, That he is yet taken up in the *Diſcipline* of *Mortification*, that he is *contending* with his *Luſts* and *Paſſions*, which are not yet ſo far reduc'd, ſo far ſubdu'd and brought under, as to leave him in a ſtate of *Liberty* and *Peace*, and in a capacity of *extending* and *enlarging* his *Charity*. This Remark, that the *Inconſiderableneſs* of our Good Works is reaſon enough to queſtion, not only one's *Perfection*, but *Sincerity*, holds good in *ſuch* Caſes only, where neither the *Opportunity* nor *Capacity* of higher and nobler Performances is wanting. I dare not pronounce, that no man can be a *Chriſtian*, unleſs he be fit to be a *Martyr*: 'Tis true, the *loweſt* degree of *Sincerity* muſt imply a purpoſe and *Reſolution* of Univerſal *Obedience*, in Defiance of all Temptations; but yet *That* Grace, for ought I can prove to the contrary, may be ſufficient to *Save* a man, that is ſufficient to maſter the Difficulties *he* is to encounter with, although he ſhould not be to grapple with

with the Diſtempers and Trials to which the Body and the State of *another* man may be ſubject. Surely the Wiſdom and the Faithfulneſs of God can be no further concern'd, than to qualify any one for the diſcharge of *thoſe* duties which he thinks fit to *call* him to: And if the diſcharge of ſuch duties be not a ſufficient Proof of our Sincerity, we can never have any, but muſt be always held in ſuſpence and torture about our future State. I ſee no reaſon to queſtion, but that the Diſciples of our Lord were in a ſtate of *Grace* before the *Reſurrection*, and the following *Pentecoſt*: And yet I think I have plain Reaſon to believe, that they were not fit to be *Martyrs* and *Confeſſors* till then; the *Grace* they had *before* might, I doubt it not, have enabled them to live *Virtuouſly* amidſt *Common* and *Ordinary* Temptations: But it was neceſſary that they ſhould be endow'd with *Power* from on *High*, before they could be fit to encounter thoſe *fiery Trials*, to which the *Preaching* of the *Goſpel* was to expoſe them. To this ſurely our Maſter refers, when he tells the *Phariſees*, *That the children of the bride-chamber were not to faſt while the bridegroom was with them*: When he tells *his* Diſciples, *I have many things to ſay, but you cannot bear them yet*: When he asked the Sons of *Zebedee*, *Are ye able to drink of the cup that I*

ſhall

ſhall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptiſm that I am baptized with, Matth. 20. 21.? If this be true Divinity, as I am (I had almoſt ſaid) confident it is, then I am confident, that which requires very *unaccountable* Teſts of a man's *Sincerity,* is very *extravagant.* For example, when men talk at this rate, that a ſincere Chriſtian ſhould have ſuch an *Abhorrence* for *Sin,* as to fear *Guilt* more than its *Puniſhment:* Such a *Love* of *God,* as rather than offend Him, to be content to Precipitate and Plunge himſelf into the Jaws, not of *Death,* like the Martyrs, but of *Hell* it ſelf.

4*thly.* If the Duties of Religion be very *troubleſome* and *uneaſy* to a Man, we may from hence conclude, that he is not *Perfect:* For though the *Beginning* of Wiſdom and Virtue be generally *harſh* and *ſevere* to the *Fool* and *Sinner,* yet to him that has *Conquered,* the Yoke of Chriſt is *eaſy,* and his Burthen *light*; *to him that is filled with the love of God, his commandments are not grievous*; hence is that obſervation of the Son of *Sirach,* Eccluſ. 4. 17, 18. *For at the firſt ſhe will walk with him by crooked ways, and bring fear and dread upon him, and torment him with her diſcipline, until ſhe may truſt his ſoul, and try him by her laws*; *then will ſhe return the ſtraight way unto him, and comfort him, and ſhew him her ſecrets.*

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The reaſon of this Aſſertion is palpable; it is the nature of an *Habit* to render *difficult* Things *eaſy*, *harſh* Things *pleaſant*, to *fix* a *floating* and *uncertain* Humour, to Nurſe and Ripen a weak and tender *Diſpoſition* into *Nature*. And 'tis as reaſonable to expect theſe effects in *Religious*, as in any *other* ſorts of *Habits*.

Laſtly. He who does not find *Religion* full of *Pleaſure*, who does not *Glory* in *God*, and *rejoyce* in our *Lord Jeſus*, he who is not filled with an humble *Aſſurance* of the *Divine Favour*, and a Joyful *expectation* of *Immortality* and *Glory*, does yet *want* ſomething; he is yet *defective*, with reſpect, either to the *brightneſs* of *Illumination*, the *Abſoluteneſs* of *Liberty*, or *the Ardor* of *Love*; he may be a *Good* Man, and have gone a *great* way in his Chriſtian *Race*; but there is ſomething ſtill behind to *Compleat* and *Perfect* him; ſome *Error* or other creates him groundleſs *Scruples*, ſome *Incumbrance* or *Impediment* or other, whether an Infelicity of Temper, or the Incommodiouſneſs of his Circumſtances, or a little too warm an Application towards ſomething of the World, *retards* his *Vigor* and *abates* his *Affections*.

I have now finiſhed all that I can think neceſſary to form a general *Idea* of Religious *Perfection*: For I have not only given a plain

a plain *Definition* or *Deſcription* of it, and *Confirmed* and *Fortified* that Deſcription by *Reaſon* and *Scripture*, and the *concurrent ſenſe* of *all Sides* and *Parties*; but have alſo by various *Inferences*, deduc'd from the *General* Notion of *Perfection*, precluded all groundleſs *Pretenſions to it*, and enabled Men to ſee how *far* they are *removed* and *diſtant* from it, or how *near* they *approach* it. The *next* thing I am to do, according to the Method I have propoſed, is, to conſider the *Fruits* and *Advantages* of *Perfection*. A conſideration which will furniſh us with many great, and, I hope, effectual *Incitements* or *Motives* to it; and demonſtrate its *Subſerviency* to our *Happineſs*.

CHAP. IV.

A General Account of the Bleſſed Effects of Religious Perfection.

THE Glorious and Delightful *Fruits* of Religious *Perfection*, may be reduc'd to theſe *Four* Heads.

Firſt, It advances the *Honour* of the True and Living *God*, and of his Son *Jeſus*, in the *World*. *Secondly*,

Secondly, It promotes the *Good* of *Mankind*.

Thirdly, It produces in the *Perfect* Man, a full *Aſſurance* of Eternal *Happineſs* and *Glory*.

Fourthly, It puts him in *Poſſeſſion* of true *Happineſs* in *this* Life.

Of the *two former*, I ſhall ſay nothing *here*; deſigning to inſiſt upon them more particularly in the *following* Section, under the *Head* of *Zeal*, where I ſhall be oblig'd by my *Method* to conſider the *Fruit* of it; only I cannot *here* forbear *Remarking*, That *Perfection* while it promotes the Honour of *God*, and the Good of *Man*, does at the ſame time promote our *own Happineſs* too; ſince it muſt on this account moſt effectually recommend us to the Love of the *One* and the *Other*; *Them that honour me*, ſaith God, *I will honour*, 1 Sam. 2. 30. And our Saviour obſerves, that even *Publicans and Sinners love thoſe who love them*, Matth. 5. 46. Accordingly St. *Luke* tells us of Chriſt, *Luke* 2. 52. *That Jeſus increaſed in wiſdom and ſtature, and in favour with God and man*; and of thoſe eminently Devout and Charitable Souls, *Acts* 2. that *they had favour with all the people*; ſo reſiſtleſs a charm is the beauty and lovelineſs of Perfect Charity, even in the moſt deprav'd and

and corrupt Times. And what a *Bleſſing* now, what a *Comfort*, what a *Pleaſure* is it, to be the Favourite of *God* and *Man!*

The *Third* and *Fourth* I will *now* diſcourſe of, and that the more *largely*, becauſe as to *Aſſurance*, it is the *foundation* of that *Pleaſure* which is the richeſt *Ingredient* of Human *Happineſs* in *this* Life. And, *as to our preſent Happineſs*, which is the *fourth* Fruit of *Perfection*, it is the very *thing* for the ſake of which, I have *engag'd* in my *preſent* ſubject. And therefore it is very fit that I ſhould render the tendency of *Perfection* to procure our *preſent Happineſs*, very conſpicuous. Beginning therefore with *Aſſurance*, I will aſſert the *Poſſibility* of attaining it in *this* Life; not by embroiling my ſelf in the Brakes of ſeveral nice and ſubtle *Speculations* with which this ſubject is over-grown, but by laying down in a *Practical* manner, the *Grounds* on which *Aſſurance* depends; by which we ſhall be able at once to diſcern the truth of the *Doctrine* of *Aſſurance*, and its *dependence* upon *Perfection*.

Now *Aſſurance* may relate to the time *Preſent*, or to *Come*: For the Reſolution of *two* Queſtions, gives the Mind a perfect *eaſe* about this Matter. The *firſt* is, Am I *aſſured* that I am at *preſent* in a ſtate of Grace? The *ſecond*, Am I *aſſured* that I ſhall

ſhall *continue* ſo to my Life's *end?* To begin with the *firſt:* The Anſwer of this Enquiry depends on *three* Grounds;

Firſt, A Divine *Revelation*, which declares in General, *who* ſhall be *Saved*; namely, They *who Believe* and *Repent*. Nor does any *Sect* doubt but that *Repentance towards God, and Faith in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, as St. *Paul* ſpeaks, are the indiſpenſable *Conditions* of Life. 'Tis true, the Notion of *Repentance* is miſerably *perverted* by *ſome*, and *that* of *Faith* by *others*: But what remedy is there againſt the Luſts and Paſſions of Men? The *Scripture* does not only *require* Repentance and Faith, but it *explains* and *deſcribes* the Nature of *Both*, by ſuch Conſpicuous and Infallible *Characters*, that no Man *can* be miſtaken in theſe *two* Points, *but* his Error muſt be owing to ſome Criminal *Prejudices* or *Inclinations* that byaſs and pervert him. *Good* Men have ever been *agreed* in theſe Matters: And Catholick *Tradition* is no where more *uncontroulable* than here: The General Doctrine of all *Ages* hath been, and in *this* ſtill is, that by *Repentance* we are to underſtand a *New Nature* and *New Life:* And by *Faith*, when diſtinguiſhed from *Repentance* (as it ſometimes is in *Scripture*) a *Reliance* upon the *Mercy* of *God* through the *Merits* and *Interceſſion* of *Jeſus*,

Jeſus, and *Atonement* of *his* Blood. *Heaven* lies open to all that perform theſe *Conditions*; every Page of the *Goſpel* atteſts this; *this* is the Subſtance of *Chriſt's* Commiſſion to his *Apoſtles*, that they ſhould Preach *Repentance* and *Remiſſion* of Sins through his Name amongſt *all* Nations. And this is one Bleſſed advantage, which *Revealed* Religion has above *Natural*; that it contains an expreſs *Declaration* of the Divine Will, concerning the *Pardon* of all Sins whatſoever upon theſe *Terms*. *Natural* Religion indeed teaches us that *God* is *Mereiful*; but it teaches us that he is *Juſt* too; and it can never *aſſure* us, what *Bounds God* will ſet to the Exerciſe of the *one* or the *other*; and *when* Juſtice, and *when* Mercy ſhall take place: *What* Sins *are*, and *what* are not capable of the benefit of Sacrifice and Repentance. And this *uncertainty*, conſidering the Sins of the beſt Life, was ever naturally apt to beget Deſpondencies, Melancholy, and ſometimes a Superſtitious dread of *God*.

The *Second* Ground of aſſurance, as it relates to our preſent State, is an *Application* of the Conditions of Life laid down in the Goſpel to a Man's own *Particular* Caſe, thus; *They* that *Believe* and *Repent* ſhall be *Saved*; *I Believe* and *Repent*, therefore *I* ſhall be *Saved*. Now that a Man upon

an *Examination* of himſelf, may be throughly *aſſured* that he *does* Believe and Repent, is evident from *Scripture*, which does not only *exhort* us to enter upon this *Examination*, but alſo aſſerts, that *Aſſurance*, *Joy*, and *Peace*, are the natural *Fruits* of it: But *let a man examine himſelf, and ſo let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup*, 1 Cor. 11. 28. *Examine your ſelves whether you be in the Faith; prove your own ſelves: Know ye not your own ſelves, how that Jeſus Chriſt is in you, except ye be reprobates?* 2 Cor. 13. 5. *But ſanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an anſwer to every man that asketh you a reaſon of the hope that is in you, with meekneſs and fear*, 1 Pet. 3. 15. *And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments*, 1 John 2. 3. *Beloved, if our hearts condemn us not*, then *have we confidence towards God*, 1 John 3. 2. 'Tis true, Men do often *deceive* themſelves, and entertain a more favourable Opinion of their ſtate then they ought. But *whence* proceeds this? Even from too *Partial* or *Superficial* Reflections on themſelves, or *none* at all. And therefore the Apoſtle teaches us plainly, that the only way to correct this Error, is a *ſincere* and *diligent* ſearch into our ſelves: *For if a man think himſelf to be ſomething when he is nothing, he deceiveth him-*

himſelf: But let every man prove his own work, and then ſhall he have rejoicing in himſelf alone, and not in another, Gal. 6. 3 4. But it is *Objected* againſt all this, That the *Heart* of Man is ſo *deceitful*, that it is a very difficult matter to make a thorough *diſcovery* of it. We often *think* our ſelves *Sincere*, when the ſucceſs of the next *Temptation* gives us juſt reaſon to call this *Sincerity* into *queſtion*; ſuch is the contradictious *Compoſition* of our Nature, that we often act *contrary* to our inward *Convictions*, and frequently fail in the *execution* of thoſe *deſigns*, in the *performance* of thoſe *reſolutions*, which we have *thought* very well *grounded*; and this being not to be charged upon the inſufficiency of God's *Grace*, but the Levity or Inſincerity of our own *Hearts*, *how* can we *ſafely* frame any *right* Opinion of our *Selves* from thoſe *affections* and *purpoſes* which are ſo little to be *rely'd* upon? To this I *Anſwer*. *Firſt*, We are not to conclude any thing concerning our *Progreſs* or *Perfection* too *haſtily*; we are not to determine of the final *Iſſue* of a *War* by the *ſucceſs* of *one* or *two* Engagements; but our *Hopes* and *Aſſurances* are to advance ſlowly and gradually in *proportion* to the *abatement* of the *Enemy's* Force, and the *increaſe* of our *own*; ſo that we may have *time* enough to *examine* and *prove* our own

Hearts. *Secondly*, A *Sincere* Chriſtian, but eſpecially one of a *Mature* Virtue, may eaſily *diſcern* his ſpiritual ſtate by the inward *movings* and *actings* of the Soul, if he *attend* to them: For is it poſſible that ſuch a one ſhould be *ignorant*, what *Impreſſions* Divine *Truths* make upon him? Is it poſſible he ſhould be *ignorant*, whether his *Faith* ſtand *firm* againſt the ſhock of all *Carnal* objections; whether he earneſtly deſire to pleaſe *God*, as loving him above all things; whether he thirſt after the Conſolation and Joy of the *Spirit*, more than after that of *ſenſible* things? Is it poſſible the Soul ſhould *bewail* its *Heavineſs* and *Drineſs* which the beſt are liable to at ſome ſeaſon or other? Is it poſſible that the Soul ſhould be *carried* upwards frequently on the Wings of *Faith* and *Love*, that it ſhould maintain a famliar and conſtant *Converſation* with *Heaven*, that it ſhould *long* to be *delivered* from this *World* of trouble, and this *Body* of *Death*, and to *enter* into the *Regions* of Peace, of Life, and Righteouſneſs? Is it poſſible, I ſay, that *theſe* ſhould be the *Affections*, the *Longings* and *Earnings* of the Soul, and yet that the *Good* Man, the *Perfect* Man, who often *enters* into his *Cloſet*, and *Communes* with his own *Heart*, ſhould be *ignorant* of them? It *cannot* be. In a *word*, can the Reluctances,

ſtances of the *Body*, and the Allurements of the *World*, be diſarm'd, weaken'd, and reduc'd? Can the Hunger and Thirſt after *Righteouſneſs* be very eager, the reliſh of *ſpiritual* Pleaſure brisk and delightful, and the contempt of *worldly* things be really and thoroughly ſetled, and yet the Man be *inſenſible* of all this? It *cannot* be. But if we feel *theſe* Affections in us, we may ſafely conclude, that we *are Partakers of the Divine Nature*, that *we have eſcaped the corruption that is in the world through luſt*; and that *the New Creature* is at leaſt *growing* up into a *Perfect Man*, *to the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt*. Thirdly, The ſureſt *Teſt* of a State of Grace, is our *abounding* in *Good Works*: *You ſhall know the tree by its fruit*, is our *Maſter's* own Rule, and it can never deceive us: *He that doth righteouſneſs is born of God*. If then we be frequent and fervent in our *Devotion* towards *God*; if we be modeſt and grateful in the *Succeſſes*, Patient and Reſigned, Calm and Serene under the *Croſſes* and *Troubles* of Life: If we be not only *Punctual*, but *Honourable* in our dealings; if we be *Vigorous* and *Generous* in the Exerciſes of *Charity*; if we be not only juſt and true, but meek, gentle and obliging in our *Words*; if we retrench not only the *ſinful*, but *ſomething* from the *innocent* Liberties

and Gratifications of *Senſe*, to give our ſelves more *intirely* up to the Duties and Pleaſures of *Faith*: If finally, we never be aſhamed of Virtue, nor flatter, compliment, nor wink at Vice; if we be ready to meet with *Death* with comfort, and retain *Life* with ſome degree of Indifference: If *theſe* things, I ſay, be in us, we have *little* reaſon to *doubt* of the *goodneſs* of our *State*: For *Good Works* being the natural Fruit of *Grace*, it is impoſſible we ſhould abound in the *one* without being poſſeſſed with the *other*. One would think now, that there ſhould be nothing further needful to eſtabliſh the *Conſolation* of a *Chriſtian*; and yet *God* out of regard, no doubt, to the vaſt *Importance* and happy *Influence* of *Aſſurance*, has furniſhed us with *another* ground of it, which is,

The *Third* and *Laſt*, namely, the Teſtimony of the *Spirit*. This Spirit, as it *aſſiſts* us in our *Examination*, ſo it *ratifies* and *confirms* our Sentence by its *ſuffrage*, *fortifying* our *aſſurance*, and *increaſing* our *Joy*. All this the *Scripture* expreſly teaches us; for the Spirit is called, *The earneſt of our inheritance, the ſeal of our redemption*, Eph. 1. 13, 14. Eph. 4. 30, 31. 2 Cor. 2. 10. 2 Cor. 5. And though it be not improbable, but that theſe and ſuch like places may relate more *immediately* to that *Spirit* of Promiſe which was conſpicuous in

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Miracles, and ſeems to have accompanied *all* that believed in the *Infancy* of the *Church*, according to thoſe Words of our Saviour, *And theſe ſigns ſhall follow them that believe; in my name ſhall they caſt out Devils*, &c. *Mark* 16. 17. Yet there are Texts enough which aſſure us, that the Spirit of God ſhould be imparted to Believers through all ſucceeding Ages, and that this ſhould be one effect of it to comfort us, and be a pledge to us of the Divine Favour: Thus, Rom. 15. 13. *Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghoſt*, and Rom. 8. 15, 16. *For ye have not received the ſpirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the ſpirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba father; the ſpirit it ſelf beareth witneſs with our ſpirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Chriſt.* If it be here demanded *what* this *Teſtimony* of the *Spirit* is: I Anſwer, 'Tis a powerful *Energy* of *the* bleſſed *Spirit*, *ſhedding abroad* and increaſing *the love of God in our hearts*, Rom. 5. *Tribulation worketh patience, patience experience, and experience hope, and hope makes not aſhamed; becauſe the love of God is ſhed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghoſt which is given unto us. This* is the *Spirit* of *Adoption*, the Spirit of *Ob-*

ſignation, the Spirit of *Glory*, and the Spirit of *Love*; happy is he who is partaker of it, he has attained the Maturity of *Perfection* and *Pleaſure*. I can ſcarce forbear going in with ſome of the *Fathers*, who thought that ſuch as theſe could never finally fall. I can ſcarce forbear applying to ſuch, thoſe words, *Rev.* 20. 6. *Bleſſed and holy is he that hath part in the firſt reſurrection; on ſuch the ſecond death hath no power.* Thus far have I conſidered *Aſſurance* as it relates to the *preſent* time. But,

2. *Aſſurance* may regard the *Time to come*; and it conduces very little leſs to the *Peace* and *Pleaſure* of a *Chriſtian* to be *aſſured* that he ſhall *perſevere* in a good State, than that he is *now* in *one*. Let us therefore in the *next* place examine what *grounds* the *Perfect* Man may have for ſuch a perſuaſion: Now theſe are likewiſe *Three*.

Firſt, The *Propenſion* and *Favour* of *God* for the *Perfect* Man.

Secondly, The *Sufficiency* of Divine *Aſſiſtance*. And,

Thirdly, The *Conſcience* of his own *Integrity*:

1. The *Favour* of *God*. I need not go about to prove that *God* will be ever ready to *aſſiſt* the *Perfect* Man; I need not prove that *his eyes are always upon the righteous*, and

and that his ears are always open to their prayers; that *they* are the dear Objects of his *Delight* and *Love: Reaſon* and *Scripture* both do abundantly *atteſt* this, and the repeated *Promiſes* of *God* to *good* Men, encourage them to *hope* from God whatever beloved *Children* may from a tender and kind *Father*. Is not *this* enough then to inſpire the *Perfect* Man with great and confident *Hopes*? He knows, not only, that *God* is an *immutable God*, free from all Levity and Inconſtancy; and therefore, that nothing leſs than Preſumption and Obſtinacy, Habitual Neglect, or Wickedneſs, can tempt him to recal his Gifts, or repent him of his Favours: He knows not only that God is *faithful, and will not ſuffer him to be tempted above what he is able*; but he knows alſo, that he has a powerful *Interceſſor* at the *Right-hand* of *God*, an *Advocate with the Father*, who cannot but prevail. Nor is this all yet; he has a great *many* things that *plead* for him with *God*: There are his *Tears* which are *Bottled* up; there are his *Prayers* and *Alms* which are gone up for a *Memorial* before God; there is a *Book of Remembrance* written wherein all his pious Diſcourſes are Regiſtred; and God is Faithful, and cannot forget his *Works* and *Labour of Love*. The *Spirit* of *God* will not ſoon *quit* the *Boſom* that it ſo long *reſided* in; it will

will not ſuffer it ſelf to be *divided* from that Perſon with whom it had entred into ſo cloſe an *Union*, that it ſeemed as it were inanimated or incorporated with him, and become eſſential to his Being: Whence it is, that the *Spirit* is ſaid *to be grieved* when he is forced and compelled to retire.

2. The *Second* Ground of *Aſſurance* for the *time to come*, is the *ſufficiency* of *Divine Aſſiſtance*. The good Man is well *aſſured*, that God will never refuſe the Protection of his *Providence*, or the Aid of his *Spirit*: And *what* can be too *difficult* for *ſuch a one? Providence* can prevent a Temptation, or remove it; the *Spirit* can ſupport him under it, and enable him to vanquiſh it; nay, it can enable him to extract new *ſtrength* and *vigor* from it; *my grace is ſufficient for thee*, 2 Cor. 12. 9. the truth of which aſſertion has been illuſtriouſly proved by the victories of *Martyrs* and *Confeſſors*, who have *triumphed* over the United Force of *Men* and *Devils*. Though then the *Conſcience* of Human *Frailty* may awaken in the beſt of men *Fear* and *Caution*, the *Aſſurance* of *Divine Aſſiſtance* cannot but beget in them an holy *Confidence*; the Snares and Temptations of the *World*, the ſubtilty and vigilance of the *Devil* may juſtly create a *Sollicitude* in the beſt of men; but when they conſider themſelves encompaſſed with the

the *Divine Favour*, they can have no reaſon to *deſpond*.

3. The *Conſcience* of his own *Integrity* is a *Third* Ground of a good man's *Confidence*; he knows that nothing but *crying* Provocations can *quench* the Spirit, and oblige *God* to *deſert* him; and he has reaſon to hope, that *this* is that he *cannot* be *guilty* of. He is ſure, that *preſumptuous* Wickedneſs is not only repugnant to his *Principles*; but to the very bent of his *Nature*, to all the *Inclinations* and *Paſſions* of his Soul: I ſpeak here of the *Perfect* Man; can *he* ever wilfully diſhonour and diſobey *God*, who loves him above all things, and has done ſo *long*? Can he forſake, and betray his *Saviour*, who has long rejoiced and gloried in him; who has been long accuſtomed to look upon all the Glories and Satisfactions of this Life, as dung and droſs in compariſon of him? Can *he*, in one word, ever be ſeduced to renounce and hate *Religion*, who has had ſo long an *Experience* of the Beauty and of the Pleaſure of it? *Good Habits* when they are grown up to *Perfection* and *Maturity*, ſeem to me as *natural* as 'tis poſſible *Evil* ones ſhould be: And if ſo, 'tis no leſs difficult to extirpate the *One* than the *Other*. And I think I have the *Scripture* on my ſide in this Opinion: Does the *Prophet Jeremy* demand,

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Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the Leopard his ſpots? then may you that are accuſtomed to do evil, learn to do well, Jer. 13. 23. St. *John* on the other hand does affirm, *Whoſoever is born of God, doth not commit ſin; for his ſeed remaineth in him; and he cannot ſin, becauſe he is born of God,* 1 Joh. 3. 9. *Whoſoever abideth in him, ſinneth not,* v. 6. *Theſe* are the Grounds of *Aſſurance* with reſpect of the *time to come.* As to Perſonal and Peremptory *Predeſtination* to Life and Glory, 'tis at leaſt a *controverted* Point, and therefore *unfit* to be laid as the *Foundation* of *Aſſurance.* But ſuppoſe it were granted, I ſee not which way it can affect our preſent enquiry, ſince the *wiſeſt* amongſt thoſe who ſtickle *for it, adviſe all to govern* themſelves by the *general* Promiſes and Threats of the *Goſpel*; to look upon the Fruits of *Righteouſneſs* as the only ſolid *proof* of a *ſtate* of *Grace*; and if they be under the Dominion of any *Sin*, not to preſume upon Perſonal *Election*, but to look upon themſelves as in a ſtate of *Damnation*, till they be recovered out of it by *Repentance.* Thus far all ſides agree; and this I think is abundantly enough; for here we have room enough for *Joy* and *Peace*, and for *Caution* too; room enough for *Confidence*, and for *Watchfulneſs* too: The *Romaniſts* indeed, will not allow

allow us to be certain of Salvation, *Certitudine fidei cui non poteſt ſubeſſe falſum*, with ſuch a *Certainty* as that with which we entertain an Article of *Faith*, in which there is no room for *Error*; *i. e.* we are not ſo *ſure* that we are in the *Favour* of *God*, as we are or may be, that there *is a God*. We are not ſo *ſure*, that we have a Title to the *Merits* of *Chriſt*, as we are, or may be, that *Jeſus is the Chriſt*. Now if this aſſertion be confined to that *Aſſurance* which regards the *time to come*, as it generally is; and do not deny *Aſſurance* in *general*, but only certain *Degrees* or *Meaſures* of it; then there is nothing very *abſurd* or *intolerable* in it. For a *leſs Aſſurance* than that which this Doctrine excludes, will be *ſufficient* to ſecure the *Pleaſure* and *Tranquility* of the *Perfect* man. But if this aſſertion be deſign'd againſt *that* Aſſurance which regards our *preſent* State, *then* I think it is not *ſound*, nor agreeable, either to *Reaſon*, *Scripture*, or *Experience*. For *firſt*, the Queſtion being about a matter of *Fact*, 'tis in vain to argue *that cannot* be, which does appear manifeſtly to *have been:* And certainly they who rejoyced in *Chriſt* with *Joy unſpeakable*, *and full of glory*, were as fully *perſuaded*, that they were in a State of *Grace* and *Salvation*, as they were that *Jeſus* was *Riſen* from the Dead.

Dead. *Secondly*, 'Tis *one* thing to ballance the *Strength* and *Degrees* of *Aſſurance*; another to ballance the *Reaſons* of it. For it is very poſſible that *Aſſurance* may be ſtronger, where the *Reaſon* of it may not be ſo clear and evident as where the *Aſſurance* is leſs. Thus for *Example*; the evidence of *Senſe* ſeems to moſt Learned men to be ſtronger than that of *Faith*: And yet through the aſſiſtance of the *Spirit*, a man may embrace a Truth that depends upon *Revelation*, with as much *confidence* and *certainty* as one depending upon *Senſe*. And ſo it may be in the caſe of *Aſſurance*: The *Spirit* of God may by its Concurrence raiſe our *Aſſurance* as high as he pleaſes; although the *Reaſon* on which it be built, ſhould not be *Divine* and *Infallible*, but merely *Moral*, and ſubject at leaſt to a *poſſibility* of Error. But *Thirdly*, Why ſhould not the *certainty* I have concerning my *Preſent State*, be as Divine and Infallible, as that I have concerning an *Article* of *Faith*? If the *Premiſes* be Infallible, Why ſhould not the *Concluſion*? He that *Believes and Repents is in a State of Grace*, is a Divine, an Infallible Propoſition: And why may not this other, *I Believe and Repent*, be equally Infallible, though not equally Divine? *What* Faith and Repentance is, is *revealed*; and therefore there is no room

for

for my being here *miſtaken:* Beſides, I am *aſſiſted* and *guided* in the Trial of my Self by the *Spirit* of *God.* So that the truth of this Propoſition, *I Believe and Repent*, depends *partly* upon the evidence of *Senſe*; and I may be as *ſure* of it, as of what I *do*, or leave *undone: Partly* upon the evidence of *inward Senſation*, or my *Conſciouſneſs* of my own Thoughts; and I may be as ſure of it as I can be of what *I love* or *hate*, *rejoyce* or *grieve* for: And laſtly, It depends upon the evidence of the *Spirit* of *God*, which *aſſiſts* me in the *Examination* of my Self according to thoſe Characters of Faith and Repentance, which he hath himſelf revealed. And when I *conclude* from the two former Propoſitions, that *I am in a State of Grace*, *he* confirms and ratifies my *Inference.* And now, let any one tell me, What kind of *certainty* that is, that can be greater than *this?* I have taken this pains to ſet the Doctrine of *Aſſurance* in a clear Light, becauſe it is the great Spring of the *Perfect* Man's *Comfort* and *Pleaſure*, the ſource of his *Strength* and *Joy.* And this puts me in mind of that *other* fruit of *Perfection*, which in the beginning of this *Chapter*, I promiſed to inſiſt on, which is,

Its Subſerviency to our Happineſs in this Life. That

That *Happineſs* increaſes in proportion with *Perfection*, cannot be denied, unleſs we will at the ſame time deny the Happineſs of a Man, to exceed *that* of an Infant, or the Happineſs of an Angel *that* of Man. Now *this* truth being of a very great *Importance*, and ſerving ſingly inſtead of a thouſand *Motives* to *Perfection*, I will conſider it impartially, and as cloſely as I can. *Happineſs* and *Pleaſure*, are generally thought to be only two words for the ſame thing: Nor is this very remote from truth; for let but *Pleaſure* be ſolid and laſting, and I cannot ſee what more is wanting to make Man *Happy*. The beſt way therefore, to determine how much *Perfection* contributes to our *Happineſs*, is to examine how much it contributes to our *Pleaſure*.

If with the *Epicurean*, we think *Indolence* our ſupream *Happineſs*, and define *Pleaſure* by the *abſence of Pain*, then I am ſure the *Perfect* Man will have the beſt claim to it. *He* ſurely is freeſt from the Miſtakes and Errors, from the Paſſions and Follies, that embroil Human Life: He creates no evil to himſelf, nor provokes any unneceſſary danger. His *Virtue* effectually *does that* which *Atheiſm* attempts in vain; diſpels the terror of an inviſible Power:

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He needs not drown the Voice of Conſcience by Wine, or Noiſe, or the Toil of Life; it ſpeaks nothing to him, but what is kind and obliging; it is his Comforter, not his Perſecutor: And as to this World, he reaps that ſatisfaction and tranquility from the *Moderation* of his Affections, which *Ambition* and *Avarice* do in vain promiſe themſelves from *Preferments* or the *increaſe* of *Wealth*. If therefore there were *any* ſtate on this ſide Heaven exempt from *Evil*, it muſt be *that* of the *Perfect* Man. But he knows the World too well to flatter himſelf with the expectation of *Indolence*, or an *undiſturb'd* tranquility here *below*; and is as far from being *deluded* by vain *Hopes*, as from being *ſcar'd* by vain *Fears*, or tortur'd and diſtended by vain *Deſires*. He *knows* the world has its *Evils*, and that they cannot wholly be *avoided*; he *knows* it, and dares *behold* them with open Eyes, *ſurvey* their Force, and *feel* and *try* their Edge. And then when he has collected his *own* ſtrength, and called in the *Aid* of Heaven, he *ſhrinks* not, nor *deſponds*; but *meets* Evil with that *Courage*, and *bears* it with that *evenneſs* of Mind, that *he* ſeems, even in his *Afflictions*, nearer to *Indolence*, than the *Fool* and *Sinner* in his *Proſperity*. So that I cannot forbear profeſſing, there appears ſo much *Beauty*, ſo much *lovelineſs* in the de-

portment of the *Perfect* Man, with reſpect to the *Evils* of *Life*, that for *that* reaſon alone, were there no *other*, I ſhould admire and prefer his *Virtue* above any *Poſſeſſion* or *Enjoyment* of Life. Give me leave to *compare* the Saint and Sinner on this occaſion; and but very briefly: *The wiſe man's eyes*, ſaith *Solomon*, Eccleſ. 2. 14. *are in his head*; *but the fool walks in darkneſs*. The Wiſe Man ſees that he has Enemies, I mean Evils; and therefore he informs himſelf well of their Strength, obſerves their Motion, and prepares for the Encounter: But Ignorance and Stupidity, is the greateſt bleſſing of the Sinners Life; and his moſt admir'd Quality is not to be apprehenſive of Evil, till it cruſh him with its Weight. But if the Sinner be not *fool* enough to arrive at this degree of *brutality*, then as ſoon as the Report of the moſt diſtant Evil, or the moſt inconſiderable, reaches his Ear, *how* it fills his Imagination, how it ſhakes his Heart, and how it embitters his Pleaſures! And to what poor and deſpicable Arts, to what baſe and diſhonourable Shifts does his *Fear* force him? When on the ſame occaſion we diſcover nothing in the *Perfect* Man, but a beautiful mixture of Humility and Faith, Devotion and Confidence, or Aſſurance in God; *He is not afraid of evil tidings*; *his heart is fixed*, *truſt-*

truſting in the Lord, Pſal 112. a frame of Spirit, which to thoſe who have opportunity and ſenſe to obſerve it, renders him both more *belov'd* and *rever'd*. *Laſtly*, If we conſider the *Wicked* and the *Good* Man, actually under the weight and preſſure of *Evil*, how much *unlike* is the ſtate of the *one* in reality to *that* of the *other*, even while the *outward* Circumſtances are the ſame? What Chearfulneſs, what Courage, what Reſignation, what Hopes adorn the *One!* What Inſtruction to all, what Satisfaction to his Friends and Relations does his Deportment afford! And how does it inſpire and warm the Breaſts of thoſe that converſe with him, with an eſteem for, and love of *Goodneſs*, and *himſelf!* What Charm, what Delight is there in thoſe gracious Speeches, that proceed at this time out of a Good man's Mouth! *I know that my redeemer liveth: The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away, and bleſſed be the name of the Lord: Thou of very faithfulneſs haſt cauſed me to be afflicted: God is the ſtrength of my heart, and my portion for ever:* and ſuch-like. And how often does he pour out his Heart in ſecret before God! How often does he reflect on the gracious and wiſe ends of Divine Chaſtiſement! And how often does he with deſire and thirſt, Meditate on that fulneſs of Joy which ex-

pects him in the preſence of God! But let us caſt our Eye now on the *Voluptuary*, on the *Ambitious*, on the *Covetous*, or any *other* ſort of *Sinner*, under Diſgrace, Poverty, Sickneſs, or any ſuch Calamity; what a mean and deſpicable Figure does ſuch a one make! What Impatience, what Deſpondency, what Guilt, what Puſillanimity, does every *Word*, every *Action* betray! Or it may be, his Inſolence is turned into Crouching and Fawning; his Rudeneſs and Violence, into Artifice and Cunning; and his Irreligion into Superſtition. Various indeed are the *Humours*, and very different the *Carriage* of theſe unhappy Men in the day of *Trial*; but all is but *Miſery* in a *different* dreſs; *Guilt* and *Baſeneſs* under a *different* appearance. Here I might further remark, that *that* Faith which produces *Patience* in *Adverſity*, produces likewiſe *Security* and *Confidence* in *Proſperity*. *I will lay me down* (may every Good Man ſay in the words of the *Pſalmiſt*) *and ſleep, and riſe again, for thou, Lord, ſhalt make me dwell in ſafety.* And ſurely the *one* is as ſerviceable to the eaſe of Human Life as the *other*. But I think I have ſaid enough to ſhew, that if *Pleaſure* be ſuppos'd to imply no more than *Indolence*, the *Perfect* Man has without Controverſy a far *greater* ſhare of it than any *other* can pretend to.

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But let us take *Pleaſure* to be, not a meer *Calm*, but a gentle *Breez*; not to conſiſt in meer *Reſt* and *Quiet*, but a delightful *Motion*; not in the meer *Tranquility* of the Mind, but in the *Tranſport* of it, or ſome thing *nearly* approaching it. *Perfection*, I'm confident, will ſuffer nothing by this change of the Notion of *Pleaſure*. How many *Pleaſures* has the *Wiſe* Man, which depend not on *Fortune*, but *Himſelf*, (I mean his Diligence and Integrity) and to which the *Sinner* is an utter *Stranger!* What Pleaſure, what Triumph is equal to that of the *Perfect* Man, when he *Glories* in *God*, and makes his *boaſt* of him all day long? When he *rejoyces* in the Lord with Joy *unſpeakable and full of Glory?* When being *fill'd* with all the *fulneſs* of *God*, *tranſported* by a Vital Senſe of *Divine* Love, and *ſtrengthen'd* and *exalted* by the mighty Energy of the *Spirit* of *Adoption*, he maintains a *Fellowſhip with the Father and with his Son Jeſus?* All Communion with God, conſiſts in this Joy of *Love* and *Aſſurance*, and has a taſte of *Heaven* in it. Let the moſt *Fortunate*, and the *wiſeſt Epicurean* too, Ranſack all the Store-houſes and Treaſures of *Nature*; let him Muſter together all his Legions of *Pleaſure*, and let him, if he can, conſolidate and incorporate them all; and after all, being put into the Scale againſt *This* alone, they will

prove lighter than Vanity it ſelf. To be the Care, the Delight, the Love of an *Almighty God*, to be dear to *him*, who is the *Origin* and *Fountain* of all *Perfections*; Lord! what Reſt, what Confidence, what Joy, what Extaſy, do theſe thoughts breed! How ſublime, how lofty, how delightful and raviſhing are thoſe Expreſſions of St. *John!* 1 Epiſt. 3. 1, 2. *Behold, what manner of love the Father has beſtowed upon us, that we ſhould be called the ſons of God; therefore the world knoweth us not, becauſe it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the ſons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we ſhall be; but we know, that when he ſhall appear, we ſhall be like him, for we ſhall ſee him as he is.* And thoſe again of the *Pſalmiſt, I am continually with thee; thou doſt hold me by my right hand: Thou ſhalt guide me with thy counſel, and afterward receive me into glory*, Pſal. 73. 23, 24. But I will deſcend to *cooler* and *humbler* Pleaſures. It is no ſmall Happineſs to the *Perfect* Man, that he is *himſelf* a proper Object of his own *Complacency*. He can reflect on the Truth and Juſtice, the Courage and Conſtancy, the Meekneſs and Charity of his Soul, with much *Gratitude* towards *God*, and *Contentment* in *himſelf*. And *this* ſurely he may do with good *Reaſon:* For the *Perfections* of the *Mind*, are as juſtly

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to be preferr'd before thoſe of the *Body*, as thoſe of the *Body* before the Gifts of *Fortune*. Nor is it a Matter of *ſmall* importance to be *pleas'd* with one's *ſelf*: For grant any one but *this*, and he can never be very *Uneaſy*, or very *Miſerable*. But *without* this, there are very few things which will not diſturb and diſcompoſe; and the moſt obliging Accidents of Life will have no reliſh in them. 'Tis true, *Folly* and *Vanity* does ſometimes create a *ſelf-Complacency* in the Sinner; why, even *then*, 'tis a *pleaſing Error*. But there is as much difference between the *Juſt* and *Rational* Complacency of a *Wiſe* Man in himſelf, and the *miſtaken* one of a *Fool*, as there is between the falſe and fleeting Fancies of a Dream, and the ſolid ſatisfactions of the Day. This will be very manifeſt upon the *ſlighteſt* View we can take of *thoſe* Actions, which are the true *Reaſon* of the Good Man's *Satisfaction* in himſelf, and render his Conſcience a continual *Feaſt* to him.

It is commonly ſaid, That *Virtue* is its *own* Reward: And though it muſt be acknowledg'd, this is a *reward* which is not ſufficient in *all* Caſes, not great enough to vanquiſh *ſome* ſorts of *Temptations*; yet there is a great deal of *Truth* and *Weight* in this ſaying. For a ſtate of Virtue is like a ſtate of Health, or Peace, of Strength and

Beauty; and therefore deſirable on its *own* account. And if *Pleaſure*, properly ſpeaking, be nothing elſe but the *agreeable Exerciſe of the Powers of Nature about their proper Objects*; and if it be *then* abſolute and compleat, when theſe *Powers* are *raiſed*, and the *Exerciſe* of them is *free* and *undiſturb'd*, then certainly *Virtue*, which is nothing elſe but the *Perfect* Action of a *Perfect* Nature, as far as the *One* and the *Other* may be admitted in this ſtate of *Mortality*, muſt be a very conſiderable *Pleaſure*. Acts of Wiſdom and Charity, the Contemplation of Truth, and the love of Goodneſs, muſt be the moſt *natural* and *delightful* exerciſe of the *Mind* of Man: And becauſe *Truth* and *Goodneſs*, are *Infinite* and *Omnipreſent*, and nothing can hinder the *Perfect* Man from *contemplating* the one, and *loving* the other; therefore does he in his degree and meaſure participate of his *Self ſufficiency*, as he does of *other* Perfections of *God*; and enjoys within *himſelf* an inexhauſtible ſpring of *Delight*. How many, how various are the Exerciſes and Employments of the Mind of Man! And when it is once poliſh'd and cultivated, how agreeable are they all! to invent and find out, to illuſtrate and adorn, to prove and demonſtrate, to weigh, diſcriminate and diſtinguiſh, to deliberate calmly and impartially, to act with

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an abſolute Liberty, to deſpiſe little things, and look boldly on dangers; to do all things dextrouſly, to converſe with a *ſweet* and yet a *manly* Air, in *honeſt* and *open*, yet *taking*, *obliging* Language! How delightful are theſe things in themſelves! How much do they conduce to the ſervice, the beauty and dignity of Human Life! To theſe *accompliſhed* Minds we owe Hiſtories, Sciences, Arts, Trades, Laws. From all which, if *others* reap an unſpeakable *Pleaſure*, How much more the *Authors*, the *Parents* of them? And all this puts me in mind of *one* great *Advantage* which the *Perfect* Man enjoys above the moſt *Fortunate* Senſualiſt; which is, that he can never want an *Opportunity* to employ all the *Vigour* of his Mind, *uſefully* and *delightfully*. Whence it is that *Retirement*, which is the *Priſon* and the *Puniſhment* of the *Fool*, is the *Paradiſe* of the *Wiſe* and *Good*.

But let us come at length to *that* Pleaſure which depends upon *External* Objects; where, if any where, the *Fool* and *Sinner*, muſt diſpute his Title to *Pleaſure* with the *Wiſe* and *Good*. How many things are there here which force us to give the Preference to the *Wiſe* Man? I will not urge, that a *narrow*, a *private* Fortune can furniſh Store *enough* for all the *Appetites* of *Virtue*; that a *Wiſe* Man need not at any time purchaſe

chaſe his *Pleaſure* at too *dear* a rate; he need not lie, nor cheat, nor crouch, nor fawn: *This* is the price of *ſinful* Pleaſure. I will not, I ſay, urge *theſe* and the *like* Advantages, ſince the World thinks it want of *ſpirit* to be *content* with a *little*; and want of *wit* not to practiſe thoſe *Arts*, let them be never ſo *baſe*, by which we may compaſs *more*. I'll only remark theſe few things. *Firſt*, the *Wiſe* Man's *Proſpect* is enlarg'd. He is like an Artiſt or Philoſopher, which diſcovers a *thouſand* Pleaſures and Beauties in a *Piece*, wherein the *Idiot* can ſee *none*: He ſees in all the Works, in all the Providences of *God*, thoſe *Depths*, thoſe *Contrivances*, which the *Fool* cannot *Fathom*; that *Order*, that *Harmony*, which the *Sinner* is *inſenſible* of. *Next*, The Pleaſure of *Senſe*, that is not refined by *Virtue*, leaves a *ſtain* upon the Mind: 'Tis *courſe* and *turbulent*, *empty* and *vexatious*. The Pleaſure of *Virtue* is like a *Stream*, which runs indeed *within* its Banks, but it runs *ſmooth* and *clear*; and has a *Spring* that always *feeds* the Current: But the Pleaſure of *Sin* is like a *Land-flood*, Impetuous, Muddy, and Irregular: And as ſoon as it *forſakes* the ground it over-flow'd, it leaves nothing behind it, but *ſlime* and *filth*. Laſtly, The *Wiſe* Man forming a true *Eſtimate* of the Objects of *Senſe*, and not looking upon them

them as his *ultimate* end, *enjoys* all that is in them, and is not fool'd by an *Expectation* of more. Thus having conſider'd the *Objects* of Human *Pleaſure*, *two* things are plain: *Firſt*, That the *Perfect* Man has *many* Sources or Fountains of *Pleaſure*, which the *Sinner* never taſtes of, which he cannot reliſh, which he is a Stranger to: *Next*, As to *outward* things, that *He* has even here, many Advantages above the *other*. But what is more *conſiderable* yet, is,

All the claim the *Sinner* lays to *Pleaſure*, is confin'd to the *Preſent* Moment, which is extreamly *ſhort*, and extreamly *uncertain*; the *Time* that is *Paſt* and to *Come*, he *quits* all Pretenſions to, or *ought* to do ſo. As to the time *Paſt*, the thing is *ſelf-evident*: For the *Sinner*, looking back, ſees his *Pleaſures* and *Satisfactions*; the *Good Man* his *Trials* and *Temptations* paſt and gone: The *Sinner* ſees an *end* of his *Beauty* and his *Strength*; the *Good Man* of his *Weakneſſes* and *Follies*: The *one* when he looks back is encountred with *Sin* and *Folly*, *Wickedneſs* and *Shame*; the *other* with *Repentance* and *Good Works*; *Guilt* and *Fear* haunt the Reflections of the *one*, *Peace* and *Hope* attend thoſe of the *other*. As to the *time to come*, the *Atheiſt* hath *no* Proſpect at all *beyond* the *Grave*, the *Wicked* Chriſtian a very *diſmal* one, the *Weak* and *Imperfect* a

doubtful

doubtful one; only the *Wiſe* and *Perfect* an *aſſured, joyful*, and *delightful* one. And this puts me in mind of *that* which is the proper *Fruit* of *Perfection*, and the trueſt and greateſt *Pleaſure* of Human *Life*, that is, *Aſſurance*, aſſurance of the *Pardon* of *Sin*, aſſurance of the *Divine Favour*, aſſurance of *Immortality* and *Glory*.

Need I prove, That *Aſſurance* is an unſpeakable *Pleaſure*? One would think, that to Man who is daily engag'd in a *Conflict* with ſome *Evil* or other, it were ſuperfluous to prove that it is a mighty *Pleaſure* to be raiſ'd, though *not* above the *Aſſault*, though *not* above the *Reach*, yet above the *Venom* and *Malignity* of *Evils*: To be *fill'd* with Joy, and Strength, and Confidence; to ride *triumphant* under the Protection of the *Divine Favour*, and ſee the Sea of Life, ſwell and toſs it ſelf in vain, *in vain threaten* the Bark it *cannot ſink*, *in vain invade* the Cable it *cannot burſt*. One would think, that to Man, who lives all his Life long in *Bondage* for fear of *Death*, it ſhould be a ſurprizing *Delight* to ſee *Death* lie *gaſping* at his Feet, Naked and Impotent, without *Sting*, without *Terror*: One would, finally, think, that to Man, who lives rather by *Hope* than *Enjoyment*, it ſhould not be neceſſary to prove, that the *Chriſtian's Hope*, whoſe Confidence is greater, its Objects

more

more glorious, and its Succeſs more certain than *that* of any worldly Fancy or Project, is full of *Pleaſure*; and that it is a *delightful* Proſpect to ſee the *Heavens* opened, and *Jeſus*, our *Jeſus*, our *Prince* and *Saviour*, ſitting at the *Right* Hand of *God*.

Thus I have, I think, ſufficiently made out the Subſerviency of *Perfection* to the *Happineſs* of this *preſent* Life, which was the thing propos'd to be done in this *Chapter*. Nor can I imagine what *Objections* can be ſprung to invalidate what I have ſaid; unleſs there be any thing of Colour in theſe *Two*.

1. To reap the *Pleaſure*, will ſome one ſay, which you have deſcrib'd here, it requires ſomething of an *exalted* Genius, ſome *Compaſs* of Underſtanding, ſome *Sagacity* and *Penetration*. To this I *Anſwer*, I *grant* indeed that ſome of thoſe *Pleaſures* which I have reckoned up as belonging to the *Perfect* Man, demand a Spirit *rais'd* a little above the *Vulgar*: But the *richeſt* Pleaſures, *not* the moſt *Poliſhed* and *Elevated* Spirits, but the moſt *Devout* and *Charitable* Souls are *beſt* capable of. *Such* are the *Peace* and *Tranquility*, which ariſes from the *Conqueſt* and *Reduction* of all inordinate Affections; the *ſatisfaction* which accompanies a ſincere and vigorous *diſcharge* of *Duty*, and our *Reflections* upon it; the *Security* and

and *Reſt* which flows from *Self reſignation*, and *Confidence* in the *Divine* Protection: And laſtly, the *Joy* that ſprings from the *full* aſſurance of *Hope*.

But *2dly*. It may be Objected, 'Tis true all theſe things ſeem to hang together well enough in *Speculation*; but when we come to examine the matter of *fact*, we are almoſt tempted to think, that all which you have ſaid to prove *the ways of wiſdom, ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths peace*, amounts to no more than a pretty *Amuſement* of the Mind, and a *Viſionary* Scheme of Happineſs. For how *few* are there, if *any*, who *feel* all this to be truth, and *Experiment* the *Pleaſure* you talk of? How *few* are they in whom we can diſcover any ſigns of this Spiritual *joy* or *fruits* of a Divine *Tranquility* or *Security*? I *Anſwer*, in a word, The examples of a *perfect* and *mature* Virtue are very *few*; *Religion* runs very *low*, and the *Love* of *God* and *Goodneſs* in the Boſoms of *moſt Chriſtians* ſuffers ſuch an *allay* and *mixture*, that it is *no* wonder at all, if ſo *imperfect* a *State* breed but very *weak* and *imperfect Hopes*, very *faint* and *doubtful Joys*. But I ſhall have occaſion to *examine* the force of this *Objection* more *fully*, when I come to the *Obſtacles* of *Perfection*.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

Of the Attainment *of* Perfection: *Particularly, An account of the* Manner *by which Man Advances or Grows up to it.*

I Have in the *Firſt*, *Second*, and *Third* Chapters explain'd the *Notion* of *Religious Perfection*. In the *Fourth* Chapter I have inſiſted on *two effects* of it, *Aſſurance* and *Pleaſure*: My method therefore now leads me to the *Attainment* of *Perfection*. Here I will do *Two* things. 1*ſt*. I will trace out the ſeveral *Steps* and *Advances* of the Chriſtian towards it, and draw up, as it were, a ſhort Hiſtory of his Spiritual *Progreſs*, from the very Infancy, of Virtue, to its Maturity and Manhood. 2*dly*. I will diſcourſe briefly of the *Motives* and *Means* of *Perfection*.

Of the Chriſtian's Progreſs *towards* Perfection.

Many are the Figures and Metaphors by which the Scripture deſcribes this; alluding *one* while to the Formation, Nouriſhment, and

and Growth of the Natural man; *another* while to that of Plants and Vegetables: *One* while to the dawning and increaſing Light, that ſhines more and more to the perfect Day. *Another* while to that ſucceſſion of Labours and Expectations which the Husbandman runs through from Ploughing to the Harveſt. But of all the Similies which the Spirit makes uſe of to this end, there is *one* eſpecially that ſeems to me to give us the trueſt, and the livelieſt Image of the Change of a Sinner into a Saint. The Scripture repreſents *Sin* as a ſtate of *Bondage*, and *Righteouſneſs* as a ſtate of *Liberty*; and teaches us, that by the ſame ſteps by which an enſlaved and oppreſſed People arrive at their Secular, by the very ſame does the Chriſtian at his Spiritual Liberty and Happineſs.

Firſt then, As ſoon as any Judgment or Mercy, or any other ſort of Call, awakens and penetrates the Sinner; as ſoon as a clear Light breaks in upon him, and makes him ſee and conſider his own ſtate, he is preſently agitated by various Paſſions, according to his different Guilt and Temper, or the different Calls and Motives by which he is wrought upon: One while Fear, another while Shame; one while Indignation, another while Hope, fills his Soul: He reſents the Tyranny, and complains of the Perſecution

cution of his Luſts; he upbraids himſelf with his folly, and diſcovers a meanneſs and ſhamefulneſs in his Vices, which he did not reflect on ſufficiently before; he is vex'd and troubled at the plagues and miſchiefs his Sin and folly have already procured him, and thinks he has reaſon to fear, if he perſiſt, others far more intolerable. *Then* he calls to mind the Goodneſs, the Long-ſuffering of *God*, the Love of *Jeſus*, the *Demonſtration of the Spirit and of Power*; and how diſtant ſoever he be from Virtue, he diſcerns there is a Beauty and Pleaſure in it; and cannot but judge the Righteous happy. *Theſe* thoughts, theſe travels of the Mind, if they be not ſtrangled in the birth by a Man's own wilfulneſs or puſillanimity, or unhappily diverted upon ſome Temptations, do kindle in the Boſom of the Sinner, the deſires of Righteouſneſs and *Liberty*; they fill him with Regret and Shame, caſt him down, and humble him before God, and make him finally reſolve on ſhaking off the Yoke. This may be called a ſtate of *Illumination*; and is a ſtate of *Preparation* for, or *Diſpoſition* to *Repentance*: Or if it be *Repentance* it ſelf, 'tis yet but an *Embrio*: To *perfect* it, 'tis neceſſary,

Secondly, That the Sinner make good his Reſolutions, and actually break with his Luſts; he muſt reject their Sollicitations, and boldly oppoſe their Commands; he muſt take part with Reaſon and Religion, keep a watch and guard over his Soul, and muſt earneſtly labour by Mortification and Diſcipline, by Meditation and Prayer to root out Vice, and plant Virtue in his Soul. This in the Language of the Prophet is *ceaſing to do evil, and learning to do well*, Iſa. 1. 16, 17. He that has proceeded thus far, though he feel a great Conflict within; though the Oppoſition of Luſt be very ſtrong, and conſequently the diſcharge of his Duty very difficult, he is nevertheleſs in a ſtate of *grace*, but in a ſtate of *childhood* too; he is *ſincere*, but far from being *perfect*. And yet *this* is the ſtate which many continue in, to the end of their Lives, being partly abus'd by falſe Notions, and taught to believe from *Rom.* 7. that there is no higher or perfecter ſtate; partly intangled and incumbred by ſome unhappy circumſtances of Life: Or it may be, the Force or *Impetus* of the Soul, towards *Perfection*, is much abated by the ſatisfaction of Proſperity, and the many Diverſions and Engagements of a Fortunate Life: But he that will be *Perfect*, muſt look upon this ſtate as the beginning of Virtue. For

it

it muſt be remembred, that a ſtubborn and powerful Enemy will not be ſubdued and totally brought under in a moment. The Chriſtian therefore muſt proſecute this War till he has finiſhed it; I will not ſay by extirpating, but diſabling the Enemy. But here I would have it well obſerv'd, that the reducing the Enemy to a low condition, is not always effected by an uninterrupted ſeries of *Victories*; for ſeldom is any ſo fortunate, or ſo brave, ſo wiſe, or ſo watchful, as to meet with no check in the long courſe of a difficult War; 'tis enough if he be not diſcourag'd, but inſtructed and awaken'd by it. And to prevent any fatal diſaſter, two Errors muſt carefully be avoided. *Firſt*, A haſty and fond confidence in our ſelves, with an overweaning contempt and neglect of the Enemy: And *next*, all falſe and cowardly Projects of Truces and Accommodations: Nor is the ſitting down content with poor and low Attainments very far removed from this latter. *This* is the *ſecond* Stage of the Chriſtian's Advance towards *Perfection*; and may be call'd the ſtate of *Liberty*. The *third* and laſt, which now follows, is the ſtate of *Zeal*, or *Love*, or as *Myſtick* Writers delight to call it, the ſtate of *Union*.

The Yoke of ſin being once ſhaken off, the Love of Righteouſneſs, and a delight

in it, is more and more increaſed: And *now* the man proceeds to the *laſt* Round in the Scale of *Perfection*. The Wiſdom, Courage, and Vigor of a Convert, is generally at firſt imployed in ſubduing his Corruptions, in conquering his ill Habits, and defeating his Enemies; in watching over his own Heart, and guarding himſelf againſt Temptations. But this being once done, he is in full *liberty* to purſue the works of Peace and Love. Now he may advance from *neceſſary* to *voluntary* acts of ſelf-denial, which before would have been *putting old wine into new bottles*, contrary to the advice of our *Maſter*, Matt. 9. 17. Now he may enlarge his Knowledge, and exchange the *milk of the word* for *ſtrong meat*, for the Wiſdom and the Myſteries of it: Now he may extend his watchfulneſs, his care; and whereas they were before wiſely, for the moſt part, confined to his own ſafety, he may now, like our Saviour, *go about doing good*, Acts 10. 38. protecting, ſtrengthning, and reſcuing his weak Brethren; propagating the Faith, and inflaming the Boſoms of men with the love of *Jeſus* and his Truths. Now, in a word, he may give himſelf up to a life of more exalted Contemplation, Purity and Charity, which will be natural and eaſy now, though it were not ſo in the beginning. And this Life is

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accompanied *with peace and joy in the Holy Ghoſt*; with confidence and pleaſure: Now the *yoke of Chriſt is eaſy, and his burden light*; now *he rejoices with joy unſpeakable, and hopes full of glory*. Now 'tis not ſo much *he that lives, as Chriſt that lives in him*: For *the life which he now leads*, is intirely the product of Faith and Love; and his greateſt buſineſs is to maintain the ground which he has got, and to hold faſt the ſtedfaſtneſs of his hope unto the end.

To render this ſhort account of the growth of Virtue, from its very Seed to Maturity, the more *uſeful*, and to free it from ſome *ſcruples*, which it may otherwiſe give occaſion to; I will here add *two* or *three* Remarks. 1. That the ſtate and habit of *Perfection*, is a different thing from ſome ſudden flights, or efforts of an extraordinary *Paſſion*; and ſo is the fixt and eſtabliſh'd tranquility of the mind, from ſome ſudden guſts, and ſhort-liv'd fits of ſpiritual joy. No man attains to the habits of virtue and pleaſure but by degrees; and the natural method and order by which he advances to *either*, is that which I have ſet down. But as to ſome Sallies of the moſt pure and exalted Paſſions, as to ſhort-liv'd fits of *Perfection*, as to tranſient taſts, ſhort and ſudden tranſports of ſpiri-

tual pleaſure, it is very often otherwiſe. God ſometimes, either to allure the frailty of a new Convert, or to fortify his reſolution againſt ſome hazardous Trial, does raiſe him to an extraordinary height, by more than uſual Communications of his bleſſed Spirit; and raviſhes him by ſome glances, as it were, of the Beatifick Viſion. Raptures of Love, the melting tenderneſs of a pious Sorrow, the ſtrength of Reſolution and Faith, the Confidence and Exultancy of aſſurance, do ſometimes accompany ſome ſort of Chriſtians in the beginnings of Righteouſneſs, or in the ſtate of *Illumination*. Where the Conviction is full, the Imagination lively, and the Paſſions tender, it is more eaſy to *gain Perfection*, than to *preſerve* it. When a profligate Sinner in the *day of God's Power* is ſnatch'd like a Firebrand out of the fire, reſcued by ſome amazing and ſurprizing Call, like *Iſrael* by Miracles out of *Egypt*; I wonder not, if ſuch a one *loves much*, becauſe *much has been forgiven him*; I wonder not if he be ſwallowed up by the deepeſt and the livelieſt ſenſe of Guilt and Mercy; I wonder not, if ſuch a one endeavour to repair his paſt Crimes by *Heroick* acts, if he make haſte to redeem his loſt time by a zeal and vigilance hard to be imitated, never to be parallel'd by others.

Hence

Hence we read of *Judah's love in the day of her eſpouſal*, Jer. 2. 2. And of the *firſt love of the Church of Epheſus*, Rev. 2. 4. as the moſt perfect. And in the firſt times of the Goſpel, when men were Converted by aſtoniſhing Miracles; when the Preſence and Example of *Jeſus* and his *Followers*; when the Perſpicuity and Authority, the Spirit and Power, the Luſtre and Surprize of the *Word* of Life and Salvation dazled, over-powred and tranſported the minds of men, and made a thorough change in a moment; and when again, no man profeſſed Chriſtianity, but he expected by his Sufferings and Martyrdom to ſeal the truth of his Profeſſion; I wonder not if Virtue ripened faſt under ſuch miraculous influences of Heaven; or if *Aſſurance* ſprung up in a moment from theſe bright proofs of an unſhaken Integrity. But we, who live in colder Climates; who behold nothing in ſo clear and bright a Light as thoſe happy Souls did, muſt be content to make ſhorter and ſlower ſteps towards *Perfection*, and ſatisfy our ſelves with a natural, not miraculous progreſs. And we, whoſe Virtues are ſo generally under-grown, and our Trials no other than common ones, have no reaſon to expect the joys of a *Perfect Aſſurance*, till we go on to *Perfection*.

2*dly*, As *Perfection* is a work of time, ſo is it of great Expence and Coſt too; I mean, 'tis the effect of much Labour and Travel, Self-denial and Watchfulneſs, Reſolution and Conſtancy. Many are the Dangers which we are to encounter through our whole Progreſs towards it; Why elſe are we exhorted, to *learn to do good? To perfect holineſs in the fear of God*, 2 Cor. 7. 1, 2. *To be renewed in the ſpirit of our minds from day to day*, Eph. 4. 23. *To watch, ſtand faſt, to quit us like men, to be ſtrong*, 1 Cor. 16. 13. *To take to us the whole armour of God, that we may be able to ſtand againſt the wiles of the devil; and when we have done all, to ſtand*, Eph. 6. 11. 13. *To uſe all diligence to make our calling and election ſure*, 2 Pet. 1. 10. and ſuch like? Nay, which is very remarkable, theſe and the like Exhortations were addreſs'd to *Chriſtians* in *thoſe* times, which had manifold advantages above theſe of *ours*. If I ſhould ſay, That the Spirit of God, the ſanctifying Grace of God, was then poured forth in more plentiful meaſures than ever after, not only *Scripture*, as I think, but *Reaſon* too, would be on my ſide. The Intereſt of the Church of Chriſt required it; Sanctity being as neceſſary as Miracles to Convert the Jew and the Gentile. But beſides this, the then wonder-

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ful and ſurprizing Light of the Goſpel, the Preſence of *Jeſus* in the Fleſh, or of thoſe who had been eye-witneſſes of his Glory; a Crowd of wondrous Works and Miracles, the expectation of terrible things, Temporal and Eternal Judgments at the door; and an equal expectation of glorious ones too. All theſe things breaking in, beyond expectation, upon a *Jewiſh* and *Pagan* World, overwhelm'd before by thick Darkneſs, and whoſe Abominations were too notorious to be conceal'd, and too deteſtable to be excuſed or defended, could not but produce a very great and ſudden change. Now therefore, if in theſe times, many did ſtart forth in a moment fit for *Baptiſm* and *Martyrdom*; if many amongſt theſe were ſuddenly changed, juſtified and crowned, I wonder not. *This* was a *day of Power*, a *day of Glory* wherein God aſſerted Himſelf, exalted his Son, and reſcued the World by *a ſtretched out hand*. I ſhould not therefore from hence be induced to expect any thing like at *this day*. But yet if notwithſtanding all this, Chriſtians in thoſe happy times, amidſt ſo many advantages, ſtood in *need* of ſuch Exhortations, what do not we in theſe times? If ſo much Watchfulneſs, Prayer, Patience, Fear, Abſtinence, and earneſt Contention became them, when God as it were *bowed the heavens*,

heavens, and came down and dwelt amongſt men; what becomes us in theſe days, in the dregs of time, when God ſtands as it were aloof off, to ſee what will be our latter end, retired behind a Cloud, which our Hereſies and Infidelities, Schiſms and Diviſions, Sins and Provocations have raiſed? To conclude, He that will be *Perfect* muſt not ſit like the lame man by *Bethesdah's* Pool, expecting till ſome *Angel* come to cure him; but like our *Lord*, he muſt climb the Mount, and pray, and then he may be transformed; he may be raiſed as much above the moral Corruption of his Nature by *Perfection*, as our Saviour was above the meanneſs and humility of his Body, by his glorious *Transfiguration*. Theſe *two* Obſervations are of manifold uſe. For *many* expect pleaſure when they have no right to it; they would reap, before Virtue be grown up and ripen'd; and being more intent upon the fruit of Duty, than the diſcharge of it, they are frequently diſappointed and diſcouraged. *Others* there are, who miſtaking ſome fits and flaſhes of ſpiritual joy for the habitual peace and pleaſure of *Perfection*, do entertain too early confidences, and inſtead of *perfecting holineſs in the fear of God*, they decline, or it may be, fall away through negligence and ſecurity; or which is as bad, the Duties

ties of Religion grow taſteleſs and inſipid to them for want of that pleaſure which they ignorantly or preſumptuouſly expect ſhould conſtantly attend 'em: And ſo they are diſheartned or diſguſted, and give back; which they would never do, if they did rightly underſtand, that *Perfection* is a work of time; that a ſetled Tranquility, an habitual joy of Spirit, is the Fruit only of *Perfection*; and that thoſe ſhort gleams of joy, which break in upon new Converts, and ſometimes on other imperfect Chriſtians, do depend upon extraordinary Circumſtances, or are peculiar Favours of Heaven. *Laſtly*, there are *many*, who have entertain'd very odd Fancies about the *Attainment* of *Perfection*; they talk and act as if *Perfection* were the Product, not of Time and Experience, but an Inſtant; as if it were to be infuſed in a moment, not acquir'd; as if it were a meer Arbitrary Favour, not the Fruit of Meditation and Diſcipline. 'Tis true, it cannot be doubted by a Chriſtian, but that *Perfection* derives it ſelf from Heaven; and that the Seed of it is the Grace of God: Yet it is true too, and can as little be doubted by any one who conſults the Goſpel, and the Experience of the beſt men, that we muſt watch, and pray, and contend, labour, and perſevere, and that long too, ere we can attain it.

And

And whoever fancies himſelf wrapt up into the *third Heaven* on a ſudden, will find himſelf as ſuddenly let down to the *Earth* again; if he do not uſe his utmoſt diligence to fortify his Reſolutions, to cheriſh the New-born Flame, and to guard and improve his Virtues.

3*dly*, It may be *Objected* againſt the account I have given of the *growth* of Virtue, that when I come to the Maturity of it, my colours are *too* bright, my ſtrokes *too* bold, and the Form I have given it *too* Divine. For you deſcribe it, will one ſay, as if Man, now grown *Perfect*, had nothing to do, but to enjoy God, and himſelf; as if he were already *entred into reſt*, and did actually *ſit down with Chriſt in heavenly places*; as if, in a word, *Virtue* were no longer his Task, but *Pleaſure*; as if he had nothing to do but to rejoice continually, nothing further to preſs after, nothing to combat, nothing to contend with: Whereas the *Fathers* generally, and all Judicious *Modern* Writers ſeem to place *Perfection* in nothing higher, than in a perpetual progreſs towards it; they look upon Life as a perpetual Warfare, and utterly deny any ſuch Height or Eminence as is rais'd above Clouds and Storms, above Troubles and Temptations. But to *this* I have *ſeveral* things to ſay, which will *clear* my

my ſenſe about this Matter, and diſpel all *Objections*. *Firſt*, I have deſcribed the laſt Stage of the Chriſtian's Spiritual Progreſs, which I call a ſtate of Zeal, and in which I ſuppoſe the Chriſtian to commence Perfect; this I ſay, I have deſcribed in the ſame manner, and, as near as I could, in the ſame words which the *Scripture* does. *Secondly*, I do not pretend any where to aſſert, That there is any ſtate in this Life rais'd above Trials and Temptations. Alas! the moſt *Perfect* Man will find it work enough to make good the Ground he has gain'd, and maintain the Conqueſt he has won; much Watchfulneſs and Labour, much Humility and Fear, and many other Virtues are neceſſary to Perſeverance in a ſtate of *Perfection*. *Thirdly*, As the world now goes, and indeed ever did, *Perfection* is a ſtate we arrive at very *late*; and all the way to it, full of Labour and Travel, full of Dangers and Difficulties; ſo that upon this account, the Life of Man may well enough be ſaid to be a perpetual Warfare. But *Fourthly*, I do by no means affirm, That the *Perfect* Man is incapable of Growth and Improvement. Of this I ſhall have occaſion to unfold my ſenſe more fully afterwards. In the mean time I cannot forbear obſerving here, that there is a great difference between the growth of an

Imper-

Imperfect and a *Perfect* Chriſtian; for ſuppoſing Grace to be always increaſing, and the very Maturity of Virtue to admit of Degrees; yet the marks and diſtinctions of ſuch different Degrees are ſo nice and delicate, that the *Advances* of the *Perfect* Man are ſcarcely perceptible to himſelf, without the cloſeſt and ſtricteſt Enquiry, much leſs can they fall under the Obſervation of others. The *firſt Change* of a Sinner from Darkneſs to Light, from Vice to Virtue, from an averſion for God and Goodneſs, to a *Sincere*, though not a *Perfect* Love of both, is very palpable: *So again*, The change from a ſtate of weakneſs and inconſtancy, to one of ſtrength; of conflict and difficulty, to one of eaſe and liberty; of fear and doubt, to one of confidence and pleaſure, is little leſs evident than ſenſible. *But* the ſeveral degrees of growth *afterwards*, the improvements, whatever they be, of a Mature ſtate, are of *another* nature, not conſiſting in a *Change*, but *Addition*; and that made *inſenſibly*. Here therefore, the *Perfect* Man, in order to maintain the Peace and Pleaſure of his Mind, need not enter into a Nice and Scrupulous Examination of the Degrees and Meaſures of his Virtues; 'tis ſufficient that he make good his Poſt; 'tis enough if he follow the advice of St. *Paul*, 1 Cor. 15. 58. *If*

58. *If he be ſtedfaſt and unmoveable, and always abounding in the Works of the Lord.*

CHAP. VI.

Of the Means of Perfection.

SHould I inſiſt particularly on every one of the *Means* or *Inſtruments* of *Perfection*, it would lead me through the whole Syſtem of Religion; it would oblige me to treat of all the Articles of our Faith, and all the Parts of Moral Righteouſneſs. For the Virtues of the Goſpel do all afford mutual ſupport and nouriſhment to one another; and mutually miniſter to their own growth and ſtrength. And *Prayer* and the *Lord's Supper*, not to mention *Meditation*, *Pſalmody*, *Converſation*, *Diſcipline*, are founded upon the belief of all the Myſteries of our Religion; and conſiſt in the Exerciſe of almoſt all Chriſtian Graces, as Repentance, Faith, Hope, Charity: But this would be an endleſs Task. I purpoſe therefore here only to lay down ſome few *General Obſervations*, which may ſerve for directions in the uſe of *Goſpel Means*, point out the *End* we are to aim at, and

and enable us to reap the utmoſt *Benefit* from them. Theſe *Obſervations* are,

1. The *Practice* of Wiſdom and Virtue is the beſt way to improve and ſtrengthen both.

2. The *Two* general and immediate *Inſtruments*, as of *Converſion*, ſo of *Perfection* too, are the *Goſpel*, and the *Spirit*.

3. The natural and immediate *Fruit* of *Meditation*, *Prayer*, *Euchariſt*, *Pſalmody*, and good *Converſation*, is, the quickning and enlivening the *Conſcience*, the fortifying and confirming our *Reſolutions*, and the raiſing and keeping up an *Heavenly Frame* of Spirit.

4. The immediate *Ends* of *Diſcipline*, are the ſubduing the *Pride* of the Heart, and reducing the *Appetites* of the Body.

5. *Laſtly*, *Some* kinds of Life are better ſuited and accommodated to the great *Ends* of Religion and Virtue, than *others*. I will very *briefly* Illuſtrate *each* of theſe *Obſervations*, and ſuggeſt from them ſuch *Rules*, as I ſhall judge moſt ſerviceable to promote *Perfection*.

§. 1. The *Practice* of Wiſdom and Virtue, is the beſt way to improve and ſtrengthen both. This is a Propoſition almoſt Self-evident: For beſides that, it is acknowledged on all Hands, that the frequent

quent repetition of ſingle *Acts* of Virtue, is the natural way to arrive at an *Habit* of it; the *Practice* of Virtue gives a Man great boldneſs towards God, mingles Joy and Pleaſure in all his Addreſſes to him, purifies and enlightens the Mind, and entitles him to more plentiful Meaſures of Grace, and higher degrees of Favour. *If ye continue in my word, then are ye my diſciples indeed; and ye ſhall know the truth, and the truth ſhall make you free*, John 8. 31, 32. *To him that hath, ſhall be given, and he ſhall have more abundance*, Matth. 13. 12. If this be ſo, as undoubtedly it is, it is plain, That we ought not to be fond of ſuch a Solitude or Retirement, as cuts off the opportunity of many Virtues, which may be daily practis'd in a more publick and active Life. The true *Anchorite* or *Hermite*, was at *firſt* little *better* than a *Pious Extravagant*: I will not ſay how much *worſe* he is now. Meditation and Prayer are excellent Duties; but Meekneſs and Charity, Mercy and Zeal are not one jot inferior to them. The *World* is an excellent *School* to a good Chriſtian; the Follies and the Miſeries, the Trials and Temptations of it, do not only exerciſe and employ our Virtue, but cultivate and improve it. They afford us both *Inſtruction* and *Diſcipline*, and naturally

Advance us on towards solid Wisdom, and a well-settled Power over our selves. 'Tis our own fault if every Accident that befalls us, and every one whom we converse with, do not teach us somewhat; occasion some wise *Reflection*, or enkindle some Pious *Affection* in us. We do not reflect on our Words and Actions, we do not observe the motions of our own Hearts as diligently as we ought; we make little or no Application of what we see or hear, not learn any thing from the Wisdom and the Virtue, the Folly and the Madness of *Men*, and the consequences of both. And so we neither improve our *Knowledge*, nor our *Virtue*, but are the same to *day* we were *yesterday*, and Life *wastes* away in common Accidents, and customary Actions, with as little alteration in us, as in our Affairs: Whereas, were we mindful, as we ought, of our true Interest, and desirous to reap some spiritual Benefit from every thing, the Virtues of *Good* Men would enkindle our Emulation, and the Folly and Madness of *Sinners* would confirm our abhorrence for Sin; from *one* we should learn Content, from *another* Industry; here we should see a Charm in Meekness and Charity, *there* in Humility; in *this* Man we should see Reason to admire Discretion, and Command of himself, in *that* Courage and

Conſtancy, Aſſiduity and Perſeverance: Nor would it be leſs uſeful to us, to obſerve, how Vanity expoſes *one*, and Peeviſhneſs torments *another*; how Pride and Ambition embroil a *third*, and how hateful and contemptible Avarice renders a *fourth*; and to trace all that variety of ruin, which Luſt and Prodigality, Diſorder and Sloth, leave behind them.

And as this kind of Obſervations will fill us with ſolid and uſeful *Knowledge*, ſo will a diligent attention to the Rules of Righteouſneſs, and diſcretion in all the common and daily actions of Life, enrich us with true *Virtue*. *Religion* is not to be confin'd to the *Church*, and to the *Cloſet*; nor to be exerciſed only in *Prayers* and *Sacraments*, *Meditation* and *Alms*; but every where, we are in the Preſence of God, and every Word, every Action, is capable of *Morality*. Our Defects and Infirmities betray themſelves in the daily Accidents and the common Converſation of Life; and *here* they draw after them very important Conſequences; and therefore *here* they are to be watched over, regulated and govern'd, as well as in our more *ſolemn* Actions. 'Tis to the Virtues or the Errors of our *common* Converſation and *ordinary* Deportment, that we owe both our Friends and Enemies, our good or bad Character abroad, our

Domeſtick Peace or Troubles; and in a high degree, the improvement or depravation of our Minds. Let no Man then, that will be *Perfect* or *Happy*, abandon himſelf to his Humours or Inclinations in his Carriage towards his Acquaintance, his Children, his Servants: Let no Man, that will be *Perfect* or *Happy*, follow *Prejudice* or *Faſhion* in the common and cuſtomary Actions of Life: But let him aſſure himſelf, that by a daily endeavour to conform theſe more and more to the excellent Rules of the Goſpel, he is to train up himſelf by degrees to the moſt abſolute *Wiſdom*, and the moſt *Perfect Virtue*, he is capable of. And to this end he muſt firſt know himſelf, and thoſe he has to do with; he muſt diſcern the proper Seaſon and the juſt Occaſion of every Virtue; and then he muſt apply himſelf to the acquiring the Perfection of it by the daily Exerciſe of it, even in thoſe things, which, for want of due Reflection, do not commonly ſeem of any great Importance. To one that is *thus* diſpos'd, the dulneſs or the careleſsneſs of a Servant, the ſtubbornneſs of a Child, the Sourneſs of a Parent, the Inconſtancy of Friends, the Coldneſs of Relations, the Neglect or Ingratitude of the World, will all prove extremely uſeful and beneficial; every thing will inſtruct him, every thing will afford

an opportunity of exerciſing ſome Virtue or another; ſo that ſuch a one ſhall be *daily* learning, *daily* growing better and wiſer.

§. 2. The *two* great *Inſtruments*, not of *Regeneration* only, but alſo of *Perſeverance* and *Perfection*, are the *Word* and the *Spirit* of *God*. This no Man *doubts* that is a Chriſtian: And therefore I will not go about to *prove* it: Nor will I at preſent diſcourſe of the Energy and Operation of the *one*, and the *other*; or examine what each is in its ſelf, or wherein the one differs from the other. 'Tis abundantly enough, if we be aſſured that the *Goſpel* and the *Spirit* are proper and ſufficient *Means* to attain the great *Ends* I have mentioned, namely, our *Converſion* and *Perfection*. And that they are ſo, is very plain from thoſe *Texts* which do expreſly aſſert, That the *Goſpel* contains all thoſe Truths that are neceſſary to the clear Expoſition of our Duty, or to the moving and obliging us to the Practice of it. And that the *Spirit* implies a ſupply of all that ſupernatural ſtrength, be it what it will, that is neceſſary to enable us, not only to will, but to do that which the Goſpel convinces us to be our Duty. *Such* are, *Rom.* 8. 2. *For the law of the Spirit of life in Chriſt Jeſus, hath made me free from the law of ſin and death.* 2 Tim. 3 16, 17.

All ſcripture is given by inſpiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs. That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furniſhed unto all good works. 2 Cor. 12. 9. *And he ſaid unto me, My grace is ſufficient for thee, for my ſtrength is made perfect in weakneſs. Moſt gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Chriſt may reſt upon me.* 1 Pet. 1. 5. *Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto ſalvation, ready to be revealed in the laſt time.* 'Tis needleſs to multiply *Texts* on this occaſion, otherwiſe 'twere very eaſy to ſhew, That all things neceſſary to *Life and Godlineſs*, are contain'd in the *Word* and *Spirit*; that whatever is neceſſarily to be wrought in us to prepare us for, or entitle us to Eternal Salvation, is aſcribed to the *Goſpel* and the *Spirit*. This truth then being unqueſtionable, That the *Goſpel* and the *Spirit* are the *two* great *Inſtruments* of *Perfection*; we may from hence infer *two Rules*, which are of the moſt univerſal uſe, and of the moſt powerful efficacy in the purſuit of *Perfection*. 1. We cannot have too great a Value, too great a Paſſion for the *Book of God*; nor fix our Thoughts and Hearts too earneſtly upon the truths of it. We muſt imitate the *Theſſalonians*, in behalf of whom St. *Paul* thanks God, *be-*

cauſe

cauſe when they received the word of God which they heard of him, they received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, 1 Theſſ. 2. 13. that is, we muſt entertain the *Goſpel*, as *that* which has Infallible Truth in all its Doctrines, uncontroulable Authority in all its Precepts, a Divine Certainty in all its Promiſes and Threats, and a Divine Wiſdom in all its Counſels and Directions: And *he* that thus believes will certainly find the Goſpel to work effectually in *him*, as it did in the *Theſſalonians*. What Light and Beauty will he diſcern in all its Deſcriptions of our Duty! What Force in all its Perſuaſions! What Majeſty, what Dignity, what Life, what Power, what Conſolation, what Support! In one word, What Heavenly Virtue will he diſcern in each part of it, and what vaſt and unfathomable Wiſdom in the whole Compoſure and Contrivance of it! How will he then admire it, how will he love it, how will he ſtudy it, how will he delight in it! How will he be tranſported by the Promiſes, and awed by the Threats of it! How will he be pierced and ſtruck through by thoſe Exaggerations of Sin, and Captiv'd and Enamour'd by thoſe lively and divine Deſcriptions of Virtue he meets in it! How will he adore the Goodneſs of *God*, conſpicuous in our Re-

demption! How will he be inflam'd with the love of *Jesus*, and be amaz'd at his Condescension and Humility! *This* and much more is the natural effect of our receiving the *Gospel* as we ought, and pondering the Truths of it with devout and incessant Meditation. This the Royal *Psalmist* was abundantly sensible of, *Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.*, Psalm 119. 11. *Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation*, ver. 98. To which I might add many other *verses* out of that *Psalm*, containing the various and mighty *Effects* of the *Word* of *God*. Nor will any one think that I attribute too much to the study of this *Word of Life*, who shall consider that it is one of the great Works of the *Holy Spirit*, to *incline our hearts to the testimonies of God, to write his laws in our hearts*, to dispose us to attend to revealed Truths; and in one word, to fix our Minds and Thoughts upon them.

Since the *Spirit*, together with the *Gospel*, is a joint Principle of *Regeneration* and *Perfection*, 'tis manifest, That we ought to live in a continual dependence upon God. *He* must be our Hope and Confidence in the *Day of Trial*: *He* must be our Praise

Praiſe and Boaſt in the *Day of Victory*, and in the *Day of Peace*: When we *lie down*, and when we *riſe up*, we muſt ſay with the *Pſalmiſt*, *'Tis thou, Lord, that makeſt me dwell in ſafety*, Pſal. 4. 8. We muſt look upon our ſelves as ſurrounded by Enemies, and beſieged by *Spiritual* Dangers, as *David* was by *Temporal*: And as *he* in the one, ſo muſt we in the *other*, expect Strength and Salvation from *Him*. *Through God we ſhall do valiantly; for he it is that ſhall tread down our enemies*, Pſal. 60. 12. *Many nations compaſs me round about; but in the name of the Lord I will deſtroy them.* And when we have conquer'd Temptations, and routed the Powers of Darkneſs, we muſt aſcribe all, not to our own ſtrength, nor to our own watchfulneſs, but to the Grace and the Power of God. *If the Lord himſelf had not been on our ſide, now may Iſrael ſay; if the Lord himſelf had not been on our ſide*, when the Legions of Hell combined with the World and Fleſh againſt us, *they had ſwallowed us up alive*, Pſal. 124. 1, 2, 3. Now *many* will be the happy *effects* of this dependence upon God; we ſhall be paſſionately deſirous of his Preſence, of his Grace and Favour; we ſhall dreſs and prepare our Souls, we ſhall awaken and diſpoſe all our Faculties to receive him; we ſhall ever do the things that may invite and prevail with him to abide with

us;

us; we ſhall be apprehenſive of his forſaking *us*, as the greateſt Evil that can befal us. *Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlaſting doors: and the king of glory ſhall come in*; Awake O my Soul, raiſe thy ſelf above this World and Fleſh, that thou mayeſt be fit for the *king of glory* to dwell in thee: *Who is the king of glory? The Lord ſtrong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battel*; that Holy Spirit that ſubdues our Enemies, that ſtrengthens us with Might, and fills us with Courage and Holy Alacrity, *Pſal.* 24. 7, 8. Nor does the *Pſalmiſt* prepare his Soul for God by Meditation only, and Spiritual Recollection and Soliloquies; but by a careful and circumſpect Regulation of all his Actions, *Pſal.* 101. 2, 3. *I will behave my ſelf wiſely in a perfect way: O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my houſe with a perfect heart. I will ſet no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aſide, it ſhall not cleave to me.* And how earneſtly does he pray againſt God's forſaking him? *Pſal.* 51. 11. *Caſt me not away from thy preſence, and take not thy holy preſence from me.* The *Reſult* of all this, muſt needs be *Steadfaſtneſs* and *Growth* in Holineſs and Goodneſs. For *Firſt*, This is the natural influence of ſuch a dependence upon God; it places us as always before Him, and

makes

makes us walk humbly and circumſpectly, as becomes thoſe that are awed by the Preſence of ſo Holy a Majeſty: I have *ſet the Lord always before me; becauſe he is at my right-hand, I ſhall not be moved*, Pſal. 16. 1. *Secondly*, We cannot doubt but that God will plentifully beſtow his Grace on thoſe, who thus rely upon him. For where can He beſtow it with more Advantage to his Glory, or to the Propagation of Holineſs; both which are ſo dear to him? Who is a Subject more capable of it, or who can be better entitled to it, than he who thus depends upon God? As he begs it *Humbly*, and receives it *Thankfully*; ſo he will Husband it *Carefully*, and employ it *Zealouſly*.

§. 3. In *Prayer*, *Meditation*, and other *Inſtrumental* duties of Religion, we are to aim at *one* or *all* of theſe *three* things. 1. The Quickening and Enlivening the *Conſcience*. 2. The Confirming and Strengthning our *Reſolutions* of obedience. 3. The Raiſing and Keeping up *Holy* and *Devout Affections*. Great is the benefit of *each* of theſe. *Tenderneſs* of *Conſcience* will keep us not only from Evil, but every appearance of it; increaſe of *Spiritual Strength*, will render us ſtedfaſt and unmovable in all the Works of God; and *Holy Paſſion* will

will make us abound in them. To ſpiritual *Paſſion* we owe the zeal and pleaſure; to ſpiritual *Strength* or *Liberty*, the Conſtancy and Uniformity of an Holy Life; and both *Strength* and *Paſſion* are generally owing to a *Tender* and *Enlighten'd Conſcience*. For while the *Conſcience* preſerves a *quick* and *nice* ſenſe of good and evil, all the great Truths of the Goſpel will have their proper Force, and natural Efficacy upon us. Theſe then are the Genuine *Fruits* of *Meditation*, the *Euchariſt*, *Pſalmody*, and ſuch like. If they do not add life and light to the *Conſcience*; if they do not augment our *Strength*, nor exalt our *Paſſions*; if they do not increaſe our deteſtation of Sin, and our love to God and Goodneſs; if they do not quicken and excite devout purpoſes; if they do not engage and refreſh the Soul by Holy Joy and Heavenly Pleaſure; if, I ſay, they do not in ſome degree or other promote *theſe* things, we reap *no* benefit at all from them, or we can never be *certain* that we do. But though the ends I have mentioned, be of this great uſe to *all*, and conſequently *all* are obliged to aim at them, yet may the *different* defects and imperfections of *different* Chriſtians, render *one* of theſe ends more neceſſary than *another*; and by conſequence, it will be *Wiſdom*

more

more immediately and directly to intend and purſue *that*. For *Example*; if a man's *Temper* be ſuch, that his *Paſſions* do ſoon kindle, and ſoon die again; that he is apt to form wiſe and great Projects, and as unapt to accompliſh any thing; in *this* caſe, it will be his Duty to aim eſpecially at the *increaſe of Strength*. But if on the *other* hand, a man's *Temper be* cold and phlegmatick, ſlow and heavy; it is but fit that he ſhould particularly apply himſelf to the awakening and exciting *Devout Affections* in his Soul. For *as* excellent purpoſes do often miſcarry for want of conſtancy and firmneſs of mind; *So* ſteadineſs and firmneſs of mind, doth ſeldom effect any great matter, when it wants life and paſſion to put it into motion. *Again*, if one's *paſt* life has been very *Sinful*, or the *preſent* be not very *Fruitful*, it will behove ſuch a one to increaſe the *Tenderneſs of Conſcience*, to add more light and life to its *Convictions*; that by a daily repetition of Contrition and Compunction, he may waſh off the *Stain*, or by the Fruitfulneſs of his following life, repair the *Barrenneſs* of that paſt. Having thus in few words, both made out the uſefulneſs of thoſe *three ends* I propoſed to a Chriſtian in the performance of *Inſtrumental* Duties of Religion, and ſhewed in what caſes he may

may be obliged to aim more immediately at *one* than *another*; I will *now* enquire, and that as briefly as I can, *how* these *three Ends* may be *secured* and *promoted*.

1*st*. Of *Tenderness of Conscience*, or the full and lively convictions of it.

To promote this, the *first* thing necessary is *Meditation*. No man, who diligently searches and studies the *Book of God*, can be a stranger to *himself*, or to his *duty*. *Not* to his *duty*; for this *Book* reveals the whole *Will of God* in clear and full terms; it gives us such infallible *Characters* of good and evil, right and wrong, as render our Ignorance or Error inexcusable: It points out the great *Ends* of *Life* so plainly, and conducts us to them by such general and unerring *Rules*, that there is no variety of circumstances can so perplex and ravel our Duty, but that an *honest* man by the help of this may easily discover it. For this reason 'tis, that the *Word of God* is called *Light*, because it does distinguish between Good and Evil, Right and Wrong; and like a *Lamp* does manifest the Path which we are to chuse, and disperses that *mist* and *darkness*, with which the Lust of Man, and the Subtilty of Hell has covered it. And for this reason 'tis, that the Good have such a *Value*, and the Wicked such an *Aversion*

for the *Book of God.* For, *every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, leſt his deeds ſhould be reproved. But he that doth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifeſt, that they are wrought in God,* John 3. 20, 21. Nor can he that ſtudies the *Word of God,* be a ſtranger to *Himſelf* any more than to his Duty. For this Light ranſacks all the receſſes of the Soul; it traces all its Affections back to their firſt ſprings and ſources; it lays open all its deſires and projects, and ſtrips its moſt ſecret purpoſes of all their diſguiſe: *For the word of God is quick and powerful, and ſharper than any two-edged ſword; piercing even to the dividing aſunder of ſoul and ſpirit, and of the joints and marrow; and is a diſcerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart,* Heb. 4. 12. In a word, if we would preſerve the *Conſcience quick* and *ſenſible,* we muſt be daily converſant in the *Book of God.* For this commands with that Authority, inſtructs with that Clearneſs, perſuades with that Force, reproves with that Purity, Prudence and Charity, that we ſhall not eaſily be able to reſiſt it; it deſcribes Righteouſneſs and Sin in ſuch true and lively Colours, proclaims Rewards and Puniſhments in ſuch powerful and moving Language, that it rouzes even the Dead in Sin, penetrates and wounds the ſtupid and obdurate. To

To *Meditation* we muſt add *Prayer*. For this is a very proper and eſſential *means* to refreſh and renew in the Soul, the hatred of Sin, and love of Goodneſs; and to improve thoſe impreſſions which *Meditation* has made upon it. We cannot eaſily put up Petitions to *God* with confidence, unleſs we do the things that *pleaſe* him; for our hearts will miſgive us, and our very petitions will reproach us: And the meer *Thought* of entring more immediately into the preſence of God, does oblige us to a more careful trial and examination of our Actions. For God being not only Omnicient, but Juſt and Holy too, we can no more flatter our ſelves with the hope of pardon for any Sin into which we are betrayed by fondneſs or negligence, than we can imagine him ignorant of it. But this is not all; we are to pray, that God would enable us to *ſearch* out and *diſcover* our own Hearts. Pſal. 139. 23, 24. *Search me, O God, and know my heart: Try me and know my thoughts; and ſee if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlaſting.* And if we do this ſincerely, God will undoubtedly grant our requeſts; and will lay open to us all our preſent defects and infirmities, and ſhew us how far ſhort we come of the *glory of God:* That *Perfection* of Holineſs and Happineſs, which many eminent *Saints* actually arrived

arrived at upon Earth. And we may be ſure, *that* Light which breaks in upon our mind with this brightneſs, will not ſuffer any latent *Corruptions* to continue undiſcovered; nor permit us to forget the ſtains and ruins, which the *Sins* of our paſt life have left behind them. *Converſation* is another way, by which we learn to know our ſelves, and by which *Conſcience* is kept *awake*, and in its *vigor*. How convictive, how *moving* is the Diſcourſe of a Devout and Pious *Friend*? When he complains, or when he rejoices; when he relates the Hiſtory of his own Experience; when he lets us ſee the deſigns he has form'd, and the excellent ends his Soul thirſts after; how does our heart burn within us? What variety of *Affections* does it *raiſe* in us, when he makes his remarks on human Nature and the World; when he bewails the diſhonour of God and the decay of Religion amongſt us; when he relates the miſery and misfortune of Sinners, and obſerves the particular Sins and Follies that occaſion it? How often does he hereby *provoke* us to wiſe *Reflections* on our ſelves? How many new beauties does he *diſcover* to us in Virtue? How many deformities in Sin, which had eſcaped *our* Obſervations? But 'tis not the *Converſation* only of my Friend; but his *Life* alſo, from which

I derive, or may do ſo, *Inſtruction* and *Admonition*. The *Perfections* of my *Friend*, are the gentleſt and the mildeſt, and yet the moſt awakening *Reproofs* too of my *own defects*; and by the freſhneſs and luſtre of his *Virtue*, I diſcern beſt the weakneſs and the dimneſs of my *own*. How often have I been moved to turn my Thoughts with ſome *Indignation* on my own heats and commotions, while I have admired and bleſt the ſweetneſs and the gentleneſs, the ſoftneſs and the calm, very conſpicuous in an excellent Friend? And when I have heard *another* mention his *Nightly Praiſes*, and thoſe Divine thoughts which filled the *Intervals* of his *Sleep*, and made thoſe hours that are ſo burthenſome to ſome, the moſt entertaining and delightful parts of his Reſt, how have I been inwardly filled with confuſion and ſhame? How have I upbraided and reproached my ſelf, condemned the ſluggiſhneſs of my days, the dulneſs and the wandrings of my Soul by night? And I believe every ſincere man muſt find himſelf thus affected on the like occaſions. For in *this* kind of *Reproof*, which I talk of, there is ſomething more of Force and Authority than is to be found in any *other*; for the Example of Friends, does not only teach us *what* we are to do, but demonſtrates alſo that it *may* be done.

Nor

Nor does Virtue any where appear with ſo lovely and charming an *Air* as in a Friend. But after all, amongſt all the benefits we gain by excellent Friendſhips, we ought not to reckon *this* as the *leaſt*, that it is one, and that an indiſpenſable *Office* of *Friendſhip*, to *admoniſh* and *reprove*: *For the reproofs of inſtruction are the paths of life*, Prov. 6. 23. But then, that we may be capable of this Bleſſing, we muſt diſpoſe our minds to *expect* and *bear* Reproof: We muſt ſtrive after an humble and teachable Temper; and we muſt invite and incourage our Friends to this kindeſt Office; not only by unaffected requeſts, but alſo by *obeying* their advice, *pardoning* whatever infirmity may be interſpers'd with it, and *loving* them the better, as indeed they deſerve: For there is ſcarce any *better* proof of their Affection, Prudence and Courage, which they are capable of giving us.

2*ly*, A *Second* End of *Inſtrumental* Duties is the *Increaſe of Spiritual Strength*. Now *Spiritual Strength* conſiſts in the Power and Dominion we have over our Affections and Actions: And it ſtands upon *two Baſes*; the *Reduction of Sin*, and the *Growth of Virtue*; whatever does weaken and reduce our propenſions to Sin, whatever promotes the ſubjection of the

Body, adds Power and Authority to the Mind, and renders Virtue more eaſy and pleaſant. And becauſe Virtues have a mutual Connexion and Dependence upon one another; therefore whatever promotes any one, promotes all. But eſpecially, whatever ſtrengthens our Hope, or quickens our Fear, or inlarges our Knowledge, and increaſes our Faith; this does confirm and eſtabliſh our Reſolution more than any thing elſe. *Faith* is the *Root*, *Fear* the *Guard*, and *Hope* the *Spur* of all our Virtues. Faith convinces us what is our Duty; Fear makes us Impartial, Diligent and Watchful; Hope, reſolved and active in the Proſecution of it. It being thus clear, *what* our *Spiritual Strength* conſiſts in, it will be eaſy to diſcern by what *means* we are to gain it. But I can here only ſuggeſt thoſe hints and intimations which the *Reader* muſt upon occaſion, as he needs, inlarge and improve.

1. *Meditation* is the *firſt* thing neceſſary. We muſt often ſurvey the Grounds and Foundations of our Faith; we muſt conſider frequently and ſeriouſly the *Scripture Topicks* of Hope and Fear; ſuch are the Death of *Jeſus*, a Judgment to come, the Holineſs and Juſtice, and the Omnipreſence of *God*: We muſt diligently obſerve the Wiles and Stratagems of *Satan*, the Arts and Inſinuations of the *World* and *Fleſh*, and mark the

the Progreſs of *Sin* from its very beginning to Maturity; and all this with a particular regard to the Corruption of our own *Nature*, and the deceitfulneſs of our own *Hearts*. We muſt often ponder upon the Beauty and Peace of *Holineſs*, the love of *God* and of *Jeſus*, the Virtues, Sufferings, and Crowns of *Martyrs*. And *finally*, If we will increaſe in *ſtrength*, we muſt practiſe this duty of *Meditation* often, and we muſt not ſuffer our ſelves to be withdrawn from it, or be prevail'd with to intermit it on any ſlight and trivial pretences. And becauſe we are not always *Maſters* of our own *Affairs*, nor conſequently of our *Time*; therefore ought we to have ever ready at hand, a good Collection of *Texts*, which contain in *few* words, the Power and Spirit of *Goſpel Motives*, the *Perfection* and Beauty of Duties, and the Subſtance of Advice and Counſel: And to fix theſe ſo in our *Memory*, that they may ſerve as a *Shield* for us to oppoſe, as our *Saviour* did, *againſt the darts of the Devil*, and as a *ſupply* of excellent and uſeful Thoughts upon a ſudden: So that in all the little Interruptions of Buſineſs, and the many little vacancies of the Day, the Mind, which is an active and buſy Spirit, may never want a proper *ſubject* to work upon; much leſs loſe it ſelf in wild and lazy

amuſements, or *defile* it ſelf by vain or vicious Thoughts. But we muſt not only take care that *Meditation* be frequent, but alſo that it be not looſe and roving. To which end it will be neceſſary to ſtudy our *ſelves* as well as the *Scriptures*, and to be intimately acquainted with the advantages and diſadvantages of our Conſtitution, and our State; that ſo in our *Meditations* on the *Scriptures*, we may more particularly have an Eye on thoſe Vices *we* are moſt obnoxious to, and thoſe Virtues which are either more neceſſary, or more feeble and undergrown.

Next after *Meditation* muſt follow *Prayer*. Great is the *Power* of *Prayer* in promoting Chriſtian Strength and Fortitude; whether we conſider its *Prevalence upon God*, or its natural *Influence upon our ſelves*. If we conſider the *latter*, what Divine Force and Energy is there in the Confidences of Faith, the Joys of Hope, the earneſt Longings and Deſires of Love, the tender Sorrows of Contrition, the delight of Praiſes and Thankſgivings, the Adorations and Self depreſſions of a profound Humility, and the Reſolutions and Vows of a perfect Abhorrence of, and Holy Zeal and Indignation againſt Sin! How do theſe things mellow and inrich the Soul! How do they raiſe it higher and higher above *the corrup-*

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tion which is in the world through luſt! How do they renew it daily, and make it a *partaker of the Divine Nature!* The Repetition of the ſame acts naturally begets an Habit; and Habit is the Strength and Perfection of the Soul; for it is a diſpoſition ripen'd and confirm'd by Cuſtom. How naturally then muſt *Prayer* fortify the Mind, ripen good Diſpoſitions, or add Strength and Perfection to good Habits! Since it is nothing elſe but a repeated *Exerciſe* of almoſt all the Graces of the Goſpel, Repentance, Faith, Hope, Charity, and the like: And it ought to be obſerved, that *Prayer* gives us a frequent opportunity of exerciſing *thoſe* Virtues, which we ſhould not otherwiſe be ſo often oblig'd to do. If, *Secondly*, we inquire into the *Prevalence of Prayer with God*, we ſhall have further reaſons yet to reſolve, that it is a moſt effectual *means* of *increaſing our ſpiritual Strength.* What will God deny to the Prayer of a Righteous Man? He may deny him temporal things, becauſe they are not good for him? He may refuſe to remove a Temptation, becauſe this is often an occaſion of his own Glory, and his Servants Reward; but he will never refuſe him Grace to Conquer it. He will no more deny his Spirit to one that earneſtly and ſincerely begs it, than the natural Parent

will Bread to his hungry and craving Child. And no wonder, ſince Grace is as neceſſary to the ſpiritual Life as Bread to the natural; the Goodneſs of God is more tender and compaſſionate than any Inſtinct in Human Nature; and the Purity and Perfection of God more zealouſly ſollicitous for the Holineſs and Immortality of *his* Children than Earthly Parents can be for a ſickly periſhing Life of theirs. Thus then 'tis plain, that *Prayer* contributes wonderfully to the *Strengthening* and *Eſtabliſhing* the Mind of Man in Goodneſs. But then we muſt remember, that it muſt have theſe *two Qualifications*; it muſt be *frequent* and *inceſſantly importunate*. 1. It muſt be *Frequent*. I would have this Rule complied with as far as it may, even in our ſtated, regular, and ſolemn Addreſſes to God. But becauſe Buſineſs, and ſeveral Obligations we lie under to the World, do often preſs hard upon us, therefore muſt I give the ſame Counſel *here*, which I did before under the *Head* of *Meditation*; that is, to have always ready and imprinted in our *Memory* ſeveral *Texts of Scripture*, containing the moſt weighty and important Truths, in the moſt piercing and moving Language; that we may be able to form theſe on a ſudden into *Ejaculations*, in which, our *Souls* may mount up into *Hea-*

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ven, amidſt the Ardours and Tranſports of Deſires and Praiſes, as the Angel did, in the Flame of *Manoah*'s Sacrifice. 2. *Prayer* muſt be *inceſſantly importunate*, *Importunate* it will be, if the Soul be prepar'd and diſpos'd as it ought; that is, if it be diſingaged from this World, and poſſeſſed intirely with the Belief and earneſt Expectation of a better; if it be humbled in it ſelf, diſclaim all Strength and Merit of its own, and reſt wholly on the Goodneſs and All-ſufficiency of God. I add *Inceſſantly*, in Conformity to the *Parables* of our *Lord*, Luke 11. 8. and 18. 5. and the ἀδιαλείπτως of the *Apoſtle*, 1 Theſſ. 5. 17. And whoever conſiders Human Nature well, and remembers how ſoon pious Motions vaniſh, and how little they effect, will diſcern a plain reaſon, both for *Vehemence* and *Perſeverance* in *Prayer*: For *Vehemence*, that the Soul may be deeply impreſſed by pious Paſſions; for *Perſeverance*, that ſuch Impreſſions may not be effaced and obliterated. Nor let any one fancy, That *Prayer* thus qualified has not a better influence upon *God* as well as upon *our ſelves*: 'Tis true, *God* is void of the painfulneſs and defects of *Human* Paſſions, but not of the Perfection of *Divine* ones. Woe were to us, if God were an inflexible, inexorable Deity, and incapable of being

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wrought upon by the inceſſant Importunity of his poor Creatures: Woe were to us, if the ſoftneſs and the tenderneſs of the *Divine* Nature, did not infinitely exceed the little reſemblances of it in *Man*. If in a word, God did not abound in Goodneſs, Mercy, and Compaſſion, more eaſily to be moved and excited than thoſe Human Paſſions that bear ſome *Analogy* to them. Next to *Converſation with God by Prayer*, the *converſation of good men* does wonderfully contribute to the building us up in Faith and Virtue. How does the Senſe and Experience of ſuch as deſerve our eſteem and affection, ſettle and eſtabliſh our Judgment when they concur with us! How does their Knowledge enlighten us, their Reaſon ſtrengthen our Faith, and their Example inflame us with Emulation! A pious Friendſhip renders Religion it ſelf more engaging: It Sanctifies our very Diverſions and Recreations, and makes them miniſter to Virtue; it minds us when we are forgetful, ſupports and encourages us when we faint and tire, reproves and corrects us when we give back, and recals us into the right path when we go out of it. This *is*, or this *ſhould* be, the buſineſs of *Converſation*, the end and advantage of *Friendſhip*: We ſhould be often *talking* together of the things of God, *communicating*

ting and laying open the ſtate of our Souls, our Fears, our Hopes, our Improvements and Defects; we ſhould *watch* over one another, *comfort* and *ſupport* one another; our *Diſcourſe* ſhould always miniſter new warmth, or new ſtrength to our Holy Faith and Love. But among *all* the *means of Grace*, there is *no one* does ſo much *corroborate* and *nouriſh* the Soul of Man as the *Holy Euchariſt*. How many wiſe and Impartial Reflections does the *Preparation* for it occaſion? What unfeigned Humility, and what a profound Awe of the Divine Majeſty, does a previous *Self-Examination* beget in us? What a tender ſenſe of the Divine Love does the *Contemplation* of the whole Myſtery enkindle? What Firmneſs and Reſolution do we derive from freſh *Vows* and repeated *Engagements*; and theſe offer'd up with ſo much *Solemnity*? And how much, finally, is the Habit of Holineſs improved by that *ſpiritual Pleaſure*, which the ſenſible *Aſſurances* of Grace and Salvation work in us, by that *Awe* and Holy *Fear* which the whole action leaves behind on our Minds, and the *Zeal*, *Vigilance*, and *Circumſpection* it obliges us to for the time following? Not to mention here, how the Participation of this *Holy Sacrament* obliges us to a moſt ſolemn *Exerciſe* of Repentance towards God, and

Faith

Faith in our Lord Jeſus, of Brotherly Love and Charity, and the Hope of Immortality and Glory. *Here*, in a word, we prepare to meet *God*, as we would do in Death and Judgment; *here* we make an open Profeſſion of our Holy Faith, renounce the World and Fleſh, all our ſinful or vain deſires; devote our ſelves to the Service of *Jeſus*; and learn to expect Happineſs from nothing elſe, but the Merits and the Imitation of his Croſs. So profound is the *Wiſdom* of this Inſtitution, that it evidently ſpeaks *God* the *Author* of it, and proclaims the too common *neglect* of it in moſt parts of *this Nation*, an *inexcuſable* Sin and Folly.

3. A *Third end* of *Inſtrumental* Duties of Religion, is the *raiſing* and *keeping up Holy* and *Devout Affections*. I know not why *Paſſion* is ſo commonly undervalued and diſparaged in *Religion*, unleſs they who thus treat it, mean nothing by it, but a ſhort liv'd and ſuperficial commotion of the Mind, which leaves no print or reliſh behind it, and is preſently ſucceeded by Sin and Folly. *Holy Paſſion* is the vigour and ſtrength of the Soul; 'tis the ſtate and frame of the Mind when it is thoroughly moved and affected. And therefore to form to ones ſelf *Religion* deſtitute of *Paſſion*, is little better than to content one's ſelf

ſelf with one that is lazy, lukewarm, and lifeleſs. And though there be ſome *Tempers* very unapt to be *moved*, yet 'tis hard to imagine how even theſe can be wrought up to a Reſolution, or that Reſolution be ſupported and continued without their being affected ſo thoroughly, as to feel either a *real* Paſſion, or ſomething very nearly *approaching* one. 'Tis an excellent Frame of Spirit, when the Soul is eaſily elevated and tranſported into *Holy Paſſion:* And I find that all thoſe *Virtues*, or rather *Acts of Virtue*, which are deſcrib'd to the Life, and which are by all judg'd moſt Perfect and Lovely, have moſt of *Paſſion* in them. How *Warm* and *Paſſionate* was the *Love* of *David* for his *God!* What Flame, what *vehemence of Deſire* was he moved by, when he cries out, *Pſalm* 42. 1, 2. *As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, ſo panteth my ſoul after thee, O God: my ſoul thirſteth for God, for the living God.* What awful Concuſſions and Agitations of Spirit did he feel, when he thus deſcribes his *Fear, My fleſh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments*, Pſalm 119. 120. What afflictions of Soul, what tenderneſs of Heart do we meet with in the *Repentance* of St. *Peter*, when *he went forth and wept bitterly!* Of *Mary Magdalen*, or whoever that *Woman* in *Luke* 7. was, when

ſhe

ſhe waſhed the feet of our Saviour with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head! And of the *Royal Pſalmiſt* when he *watered his couch with his tears*, Pſal. 6. 6. Nor were the Pleaſures of *Aſſurance* leſs ſenſible and vehement than the Sorrows of *Repentance*, when the *firſt Chriſtians rejoyced with joy unſpeakable, and hopes full of glory.* Shall I here add *that* Holy *Indignation* againſt *Sin*, *that* vehement deſire of making ſome *Reparation* for it, which is the effect of Godly Sorrow, that *Zeal* and *Fervency* of Spirit in the Service of God, which is the *higheſt* Character of *Perfection* it ſelf? Shall I call theſe *Paſſions?* I muſt not; for though they have the heat and agitation of *Paſſion*, they have in them the firmneſs and ſteadineſs of an *Habit*. And I wiſh with all my Heart, that all thoſe other excellent *Affections* of Soul, which I before named, could be rendred *Natural* and *Habitual*. The *nearer* we come to *this*, undoubtedly the *Perfecter*. I doubt Mortality is incapable of any ſuch height: But the more *frequent* as well as the more *vehement* and *fervent* ſuch *Affections* are, the *better* certainly; for great is the Force and Virtue of *Holy Paſſion*; the flame of *Love* refines our Nature, and purifies it from all its Droſs; the Tears of a *Godly Sorrow* extinguiſh all our carnal and worldly Luſts; and the Agitations

ons of *Fear* preſerve the chaſtity and purity of the Soul. 'Tis plain then, That our Religion ought to be animated by *Holy Paſſions*; that the more frequent and natural theſe grow, the more *Perfect* we are; that being the moſt excellent frame of Spirit, when we are moſt apt to be ſenſibly and thoroughly *affected* by Divine Truths. By what *Means* we may attain to this, is *now* briefly to be conſidered. 'Tis certain, That great and important, wonderful and glorious *Truths*, will not fail to affect us, and that throughly, unleſs Luſt or Infidelity have render'd us ſtupid and impenetrable. And that *Goſpel-Truths* are *ſuch*, is no doubt at all; let the Conviction be full, the Repreſentation lively, and the *Truth* will do its work. 'Tis for want of ſuch Circumſtances and ſuch ſenſible Notions of an Object as may ſtrike the Imagination; for want of cloſe and particular Applications, when *Divine Truths* do not move us. This now does not only call us to the frequent *Meditation* of the moſt *affecting* Subjects, the Majeſty and Omnipreſence of God; the Sufferings of Chriſt, Death and Judgment, Heaven and Hell; but it ſhews alſo, how to Model and form our *Meditations*, that they prove not cold and ſluggiſh. Let the Object of our Thoughts be deſcribed by the moſt *ſenſible* Images

Images or Reſemblances, let it be clad with the moſt *natural* circumſtances, let it be made as *particular* as it can, by fixing its Eye *upon* us, and pointing its Motion *towards* us; but above all, and in the firſt place, let the *Proof* of it be clear and ſtrong. *Prayer* is an Exerciſe very apt to move the *Paſſion*: The Mind having diſengaged it ſelf from all Earthly and Bodily Affections, is prepared for the impreſſion of *Truth* and the *Spirit of God*; it draws nearer into the Preſence of God, and the ſenſe of this ſheds an awful Reverence upon it; it has a clearer, calmer, and more ſerious *View* of Divine Things, than when it is obſcured and diſturbed by worldly Objects. In a word, *Meditation* is in *this* Exerciſe render'd more *ſolemn* and more *particular*; and when the Holy Fire is kindled in the Soul, it dilates and diffuſes it ſelf more and more, till the ſtrength of Deſire, the vehemence of Holy Love tranſcending the weakneſs of this Mortal Nature, we *faint* under the *Paſſions* that we cannot *bear*. The *Lord's Supper* is an Holy Rite, wonderfully adapted to raiſe excellent *Paſſions*: *Here* Chriſt is, as it were, *ſet forth Crucified amongſt us*; we ſee His *Body* broken, and His *Blood* poured forth; *here* with a devout Joy we receive and embrace Him by Faith and Love in thoſe *Symbols* of His

Body

Body and Blood, and *Pledges* of His Love. The *Soul* muſt be very *ill prepared*, it muſt have very imperfect Notions of Sin and Damnation, the Croſs of Chriſt, Grace and Salvation, which is not ſenſible of a *Crowd* of Holy *Paſſions* ſpringing up in it at *this Sacrament*. *Hymns* and *Pſalms* have, by I know not what Natural *Magick*, a peculiar Force and Operation upon a pious Mind. *Divine Poetry* has a noble elevation of Thoughts; it does not deviſe and counterfeit *Paſſions*, but only *vents* thoſe which it *feels*; and theſe are pure and lovely, kindled from above. Therefore are all its Characters natural, its Deſcriptions lively, its Language moving and powerful; and all is ſo directly ſuited to a *Devout* Mind, that it preſently enters, moves, and actuates it, inſpires and informs it with the very *Paſſions* it deſcribes. And though all Good Men are not *equally* mov'd in this Duty, yet all, I believe, are *more* or *leſs* moved. It was very much the buſineſs of the *Prophets*, and all of *Prophetick Education*; our *Lord* and his *Diſciples* practis'd it frequently; it was ever a great part of *Religious Joy*, and one of the greateſt Pleaſures of pious *Retirement*: And I wiſh from my Heart the eſteem of it were revived in *our* days; I perſuade my ſelf it would add much to the *Warmth* and *Plea-*

ſure of Devotion; it would contribute to introduce *Religion* into our *Families*; and for ought I know, into our very *Recreations* and *Friendſhips*. And this minds me, that as I have under every *foregoing Head* taken notice of the Advantages of *Converſation*, ſo I ſhould not forget it *here*. This has a lively influence upon our Minds, and always kindles in the Soul a gentle heat. And did we but accuſtom our ſelves to *entertain* one another with Diſcourſe about another World; did we mingle the *Praiſes of God* with the Feaſts and Joys of Life; did we retire to our *Country Houſes* to contemplate the variety and riches of Divine Wiſdom and Bounty in thoſe *natural* Scenes of Pleaſure which the *Country* affords, and did we now and then invite our *Friends* to join with us in offering up *Hallelujahs* to God on this account, what Brightneſs and Serenity, what Calm and Pleaſure, would this diffuſe through all our Souls, through all our Days! To this that I have ſaid touching the exciting *Holy Paſſions*, I will only add one *Obſervation*, formed upon thoſe words of the *Apoſtle*, James 5. 13. *Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him ſing Pſalms.* That *Religion* muſt be accommodated to *Nature*, and that devout *Paſſions* will ſoon ſhoot up, when they are engrafted upon a *Natural* Stock.

Stock. With which I will join this *other*, That ſince we are moſt affected by ſuch Truths as are moſt particular, circumſtantiated, and ſenſible, and therefore imprint themſelves more eaſily and deeply on our Imagination; for this Reaſon I ſhould recommend the *Reading* the *Lives* of *Saints* and *excellent Perſons*, were they not generally writ ſo, that we have reaſon to deſire ſomewhat more of the Spirit of *Piety* in the *Learned*, and more of *Judgment* in the *Pious*, who have employed their Pens on this Argument.

§. 4. The immediate *Ends* of *Diſcipline* are, the *ſubduing the Pride of the Heart*, and the *reducing the Appetites of the Body*. By *Diſcipline*, I here underſtand whatever *voluntary Rigours* we impoſe upon our *ſelves*, or whatever *voluntary Reſtraints* we lay upon our allowed *Enjoyments*. And when I ſay that the *Humiliation* of the *Heart*, and *ſubjection* of the *Body* are the immediate Ends of *both*, I do not exclude any *other* which may be *involved* in theſe, or *reſult* from them. Now, of what *Importance* theſe two things are, I need not ſhew. For ſince all Sin is diſtinguiſhed in Scripture into the filthineſs of the *Spirit* and the *Fleſh*, it is plain, that the *Pride* of the *Heart*, and the *Luſt* of the *Body*, are the

two great cauſes of all Immorality and Uncleanneſs. And therefore theſe are the *two* great *Ends* which the Wiſe and Good have ever had in their *Eye* in all their Acts of *Self-denial* and *Mortification.* This is ſufficiently atteſted by the Example of *David*, Pſalm 131. *Lord, I am not high-minded, I have no proud looks. I do not exerciſe my ſelf in great matters, which are too high for me: but I refrain my ſoul, and keep it low, like as a child that is weaned from his mother; yea, my ſoul is even as a weaned child.* And from that other of St. *Paul*, 1 Cor. 9. 25, 26, 27. *And every one that ſtriveth for the maſtery, is temperate in all things: Now, they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. I therefore ſo run, not as uncertainly; ſo fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into ſubjection; leſt that by any means when I have preached to others, I my ſelf ſhould be a caſt-away.* Whoever thus mortifies the *Pride* of the *Heart*, whoever thus brings under the *Body*, will ſoon find himſelf truly ſet *free*, and *Maſter* of himſelf and Fortune: He will be able to *run the way of God's Commandments*, and to advance on ſwiftly towards *Perfection*, and the Pleaſure and Happineſs that attends it.

And

And to *attain* theſe bleſſed *Ends*, I do not think that we need enſnare our Souls in the perpetual Bonds of *Monaſtick Vows*; I do not think that we are to expoſe our ſelves by any *Ridiculous* or *Fantaſtick* Obſervances: There is, I ſay, *no need* of this; for we may, as oft as we ſhall ſee fit, retrench our Pleaſures, abate of the Shew and Figure of Life; we may renounce our own Wills to comply with theirs who cannot ſo well pretend either to Authority or Diſcretion: And if theſe things cannot be done in ſome circumſtances, without becoming *Fools for Chriſt*; that is, without that Tameneſs, that Condeſcenſion, that Diminution of our ſelves which will never comport with the Humors and the Faſhions of the World; here is ſtill the more room for *Mortification*, and for a nearer and more eminent Imitation of the Bleſſed *Jeſus*: Provided ſtill we decline all Affectation of Singularity; and when we practiſe any extraordinary Inſtance of *Self-denial*, we be ever able to juſtify it to Religious and Judicious Perſons, by the Propoſal of ſome excellent End. *Faſting* indeed is plainly preſcribed in *Scripture*; and though the *Obligation* to it, with reſpect to its Frequency and Meaſure, be not the ſame on *all*, yet *all* ſhould ſome time or other practiſe it, as far as the Rules of *Chriſtian Prudence* will permit.

And I have often thought, that *Faſting* ſhould generally conſiſt, rather in Abſtinence from *pleaſing* Meats, than from *all*; not the Food which *nouriſhes* our Strength, but that which *gratifies* the Palate, miniſtring moſt directly to Wantonneſs and Luxury.

For the better regulating of Voluntary Diſcipline, I propoſe by way of Advice Three Things. 1. I do not think it beſt to bring our ſelves under any perpetual and unalterable Ties in any Inſtance of Self-denial: There is a Virtue in *Enjoying* the World, as well as in *Renouncing* it; and 'tis as great an Excellence of Religion to know how to *abound*, as how to *ſuffer want*. Nay, what is more, all voluntary Auſterities are in order to give us a Power and Dominion over our ſelves in the general courſe of a proſperous Life. And laſtly, I very much doubt, when once a Man has long and conſtantly *accuſtomed* himſelf to any Rigor, whether it *continue* to have much of *Mortification* in it, or whether it ſo effectually tend to promote our *Spiritual Liberty*, as it would if we did *return* to it but *now* and *then*, as we ſaw occaſion. 2. We muſt not multiply *unneceſſary* Severities; and that no Man may think more needful than really are, I obſerve here, That as there are very *few* who have not in their

Nature

Nature very conſiderable *Infirmities*, ſo are there *as few* who have not in their *Fortune* very conſiderable *Inconveniences*: And if they would apply themſelves to the *Maſtering* of both theſe as they ought, they would ſtand in *leſs need* of the *Diſcipline* of Arbitrary Auſterities. There are many things too *trifling* to be taken notice of, which yet do prove ſufficient to diſturb the quiet of moſt, and betray them to many Paſſions and Indecencies: Nay, the Weakneſſes of good men are ſometimes fed by Temptations of very little moment. Now to *ſurmount* theſe Temptations, and to frame and accommodate the Mind to bear the little ſhocks and juſtles which we daily meet with, without any Diſcompoſure or Diſpleaſure, is a matter of great *uſe* to the Tranquility of Life, and the Maturity of Virtue. To be able to *bear* the Pride of one, and the Stupidity of another; one while to encounter Rudeneſs, another while Neglect, without being *moved* by either; to *ſubmit* to Noiſe, Diſorder, and the Diſtraction of many little Affairs, when one is naturally a lover of Quietneſs and Order, or when the Mind is intent upon things of Importance; in one word, to *digeſt* the perpetual diſappointments which we meet with, both in Buſineſs and Pleaſure, and in all the little Projects, which

not the Elegant and Ingenious only, but People of all Stations and all Capacities purſue; to *ſuffer* all the Humours and Follies, the Errors, Artifices, Indecencies, and Faults of thoſe we have to do with, with that Temper we ought, that is, with a *Calmneſs* which proceeds not from an unconcernment for the good of others, but a juſt Dominion over our own Spirits; *This* is a great *Height*; and to train our ſelves up to it daily with much Patience, Vigilance, and application of Mind, is the *beſt Diſcipline*: Though I do not mean hereby to exclude all *voluntary Impoſitions*; for in order to *Maſter* the Evils which we cannot avoid, it may be of good uſe now and then to form the Mind by *voluntary Trials* and Difficulties of our own chuſing.

3. Laſtly, we muſt ever have a care not to loſe the *Subſtance* for the *Shadow*, not to reſt in the *Means*, and neglect the *End*; being much taken up in *Diſcipline* without producing any *Fruits* of it. For this is taking much pains to little purpoſe; travelling much without making any Progreſs. But much more muſt we take care in the *next* place, that the *Diſcipline* we put our ſelves upon, do not produce any *ill Fruit*. To which end, we muſt carefully obſerve *three* things. 1. That we keep to that *Moderation* which Spiritual *Prudence* requires; nei-

neither expoſing nor entangling our ſelves, nor diſcouraging others by *Exceſſes* and *Extravagancies*. 2. That our *Self-denial* never betray us into *Pride* or *Uncharitableneſs*; for if it tempt us to over-rate our ſelves, and deſpiſe others, this is a flat *Contradiction* to one of the main Ends of Chriſtian Diſcipline, which is, the *Humiliation* of the *Heart*. 3. That we ever preſerve, nay, increaſe the *Sweetneſs* and *Gentleneſs* of our Minds; for whatever makes us ſower and moroſe, or peeviſh and unſociable, makes us certainly ſo much worſe: And inſtead of begetting in us nearer Reſemblanees of the *Divine* Nature, gives us a very ſtrong tincture of a *Diveliſh* one. *Athanaſius* therefore in the Life of *Anthony the Hermite* obſerves, amongſt other his great Virtues, That after Thirty Years ſpent in a ſtrange kind of retired, and ſolitary Life, καὶ γὰρ οὐκ ὡς ὄρει τραφεὶς, κἀκεῖ γέρων γενόμενος, ἄγριον εἶκε τὸ ἦθος, ἀλλὰ καὶ χαρίεις ἦν, καὶ πολιτικὸς. He did not appear to his Friends with a ſullen or ſavage, but with an obliging ſociable *Air*: And there is indeed but little reaſon, why the *Look* ſhould be lowring and contracted, when the *Heart* is filled with Joy and Charity, Goodneſs, and Pleaſure. A Serene open *Countenance*, and a chearful grave *Deportment*, does beſt ſuit the Tranquility,

lity, Purity, and Dignity of a Christian Mind.

§. 5. *Lastly, Some* kinds of *Life* are better suited and accommodated to the great *Ends* of Religion and Virtue than *others*. I shall not here enter into an Examination of the Advantages or Disadvantages there are in the *several kinds of Life* with reference to Religion. The settling *this* and several *other* things relating to it, was one main design of my *last Book*. All therefore that I have *here* to do, is but to make one plain *Inference* from all that has been advanced in *this Chapter*. If *Perfection* and *Happiness* cannot be obtained without a frequent and serious *Application* of our selves to the *Means* here insisted on; then 'tis plain, that we ought to cast our *Lives*, if we can, into such a *Method* that we may be in a *capacity* to do this. To speak more particularly and closely; since *Meditation*, *Prayer*, and *Holy Conversation*, are so necessary to *quicken* the *Conscience*, *excite* our *Passions*, and *fortify* our *Resolutions*, it is evident that it is as necessary so to model and form our Lives, that we may have time enough to bestow on these. For they, whose Minds and Time are taken up by the *World*, have very little leisure for things of *this* nature, and are very little disposed to them, and as ill qua-

qualified for them. As to *Converſation*, as the World goes now, 'tis not to be expected that it ſhould have in it any reliſh of Piety, unleſs between ſuch as have entred into a cloſe and ſtrict *Friendſhip*. But the *Worldly Man* is a ſtranger to true *Friendſhip*; 'tis too ſacred, too delicate a thing for a Mind devoted to the *World*, to be capable of. A regard to Intereſt, to ſome outward Forms and Decencies; the gratification of ſome natural Inclination, the neceſſity of ſome kind of Diverſion and Enjoyment, may invite him to more *Familiarity* with ſome, than others. But 'tis hard to believe, that there ſhould be any thing in ſuch *Combinations*, of *that* which is the very Life and Soul of *Friendſhip*, a ſincere and undeſigning Paſſion, increaſed by mutual Confidences and Obligations, and ſupported and ſtrengthen'd by Virtue, and Honour. As to *Prayer*, *Men of buſineſs* do, I doubt, oftner *read* or *ſay Prayers*, than *Pray*; for 'tis very hard to imagine that a Soul that grovels perpetually here upon Earth, that is inceſſantly Sollicitous about the things of this World, and that enters abruptly upon this Duty without any *Preparation*, ſhould immediately take Fire, be filled with Heavenly Vigor, and be tranſported with earneſt and impatient deſire of Grace and Glory. Ah! How hard is it for him who Hungers

Hungers and Thirſts perpetually after the profits of *this World*, to *hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs* too! If ſuch Minds as *theſe* retain the Belief of a Providence, ſome awe of God, and ſome degree of Gratitude towards him, 'tis as *much* as may reaſonably be expected from them: And may *this* avail them as far as it *can!* Laſtly, as to *Meditation*, how can it be imagined that ſuch whoſe Minds and Bodies are fatigued and haraſſed by *Worldly Buſineſs*, ſhould be much inclined to it, or well prepared for it? How ſhould *theſe* Men form any Notion of a perfect and exalted Virtue, of devout and Heavenly Paſſion? What Conceptions can they have of the Power and Joy of the Holy Ghoſt, of Poverty of Spirit, or Purity of Heart, or the Diffuſion of the Love of God in our Souls? What Idea's can they entertain of an Heaven, or of Angelical Pleaſure and Beatitude? In a word, the *Religion* of Men intent upon *this World*, when they pretend to any, which too often they do not, conſiſts eſpecially in *two* things, In *Abſtaining* from *Wickedneſs*, and *doing the Works* of their *Civil Calling*; and how far they may be ſenſible of *higher* Obligations, I determine not. Good God! What a *Mercy* it is to theſe poor Creatures, that 'tis the Faſhion of their Country, as well as a Precept of our Religion, to Dedicate

dicate *one* Day in *ſeven* to the Service of God and their Souls! But have I not often, *taught*, that *Purity of Intention* Converts the Works of a *ſecular Calling* into the *Works of God?* I *have* ſo, 'tis univerſally taught, 'tis the Doctrine of the Goſpel; and therefore I ſhall never *retract* it; but ah! How *hard* a thing is it for a *Worldly* Man to *maintain* this *Purity of Intention!* How hard a thing is it for a Mind eaten up by the Love and Cares of *this World* to do all to the Honour of God! Though therefore I cannot *retract* this Doctrine, yet the *longer* I live, the *more* reaſon do I ſee, for *qualifying* and *guarding* it with this *Caution:* Let no man that deſires to be *Saved*, much leſs that deſires to be *Perfect*, take Sanctuary in *Purity of Intention*, while he ſuffers the Works of his *Secular Calling* to ingroſs his Soul, and intirely uſurp his Time. If *Secular Works* exclude and thruſt out of doors ſuch as are properly *Religious*, it will not be eaſy to conceive, how the Power of Godlineſs ſhould be maintained, how any wiſe Thoughts, or Heavenly Deſires ſhould be preſerved in ſuch men; or how, finally, thoſe who have utterly given up themſelves to the *wiſdom of this World*, ſhould retain any true value for thoſe Maxims of the Goſpel, wherein conſiſts the *true Wiſdom, that is*

from

from above. All that I have ſaid againſt a Life of *Buſineſs* may, with equal or greater force, be urged againſt a Life of *Pleaſure*; I mean, *that* which they call *Innocent Pleaſure*: The *one* and the *other* entangle and enſnare the Mind; the *one* and the *other* leave in it a peculiar reliſh, which continues long after the hurry both of Pleaſure and Buſineſs is over. But all this while, I would not have what I have *ſaid* to be *extended* further than I deſign it, to raiſe *ſcruples* in *Virtuous* and *Good* Men, inſtead of *reforming* the too eager Applications of the *Earthy* to the things of this World.

CHAP. VII.

Of Motives *to* Perfection.

INnumerable are the *Motives* to *Perfection*, which offer themſelves to any one that reflects ſeriouſly on this Argument. An hearty endeavour after *Perfection* is the beſt proof of *ſincerity*; the neareſt approach to *Perfection*, is the neareſt approach to the utmoſt *ſecurity* this Life is capable of. Great is the beauty and lovelineſs of an *exalted* Virtue, great the Honour and Authority of it; and a very happy influence it has even upon our Tem-

Temporal Affairs: And to this may be added, the Peace and Tranquility of a wiſe Mind, ſanctified Affections, and a regular Life. Beſides, the Love of *God* is boundleſs, and the Love of *Jeſus* is ſo too; and therefore demand not a lazy, feeble, or unſteddy Virtue, but a ſtrong and vigorous one, a warm and active; ſuch as a true *Faith*, great *Hopes*, and a paſſionate *Love* do naturally excite us to. To all this I might add, that the *Spirit* of God is always preſſing on and advancing, deſirous to communicate *himſelf* to us more and more plentifully, if we be not backward or negligent our ſelves. But theſe and many other *Enforcements* to the Duty of *Perfection*, ſhould I enlarge on them, would ſwell this *Treatiſe* to an intolerable bulk. Nor indeed is it neceſſary; for the 4th *Chapter*, where I Treat of the *Fruits of Perfection*, does contain ſuch *Motives* to it, as are ſufficient to excite in any one that reads them, a moſt vehement deſire and thirſt after it. Here therefore all that I think fit to do, is, to put my *Reader* in mind of *another Life*: In the Glories and Pleaſures of which, I need not prove that the *Perfect* Man will have the greateſt ſhare. *This* is a *Motive* that muſt never be out of the thoughts of the Man that will be *Perfect*; and *that* for *three* Reaſons, which I will but juſt mention. 1. With-

1. Without *another Life*, we can never form any true Notion of a *Perfect Virtue*. *Sociable* and *Civil* Virtues may be ſupported by *Temporal Motives*, and fram'd and model'd by *Worldly Conveniencies*; but a *Divine* Virtue muſt be built upon a *Divine* Life, upon a *Heavenly* Kingdom. The reaſon of this Aſſertion is plain; the *Means* muſt always bear Proportion to the *End*; where therefore the end is an Imperfect Temporal Good, there needs no more than imperfect *unfiniſhed* Virtue to attain it; but where the End is Heavenly and Immortal, the Virtue ought to be *ſo* too. Were there no *other* Life, the Standard and Meaſure of the Good or Evil to be found in Actions, would be their ſubſervieney to the temporal Good or Evil of *this* World; and by a neceſſary conſequence, it would be impoſſible to prove any higher degrees of Poverty of Spirit, Purity of Heart, Charity, and the like, to be truly *Virtue*, than what we could prove truly *neceſſary* to procure the Good, or guard us againſt the Evil of *this* Life: And if ſo, 'tis eaſy to conclude what *mean* and *beggarly* kind of Virtues would be produc'd from this ground.

2. Without *another Life*, all other *Motives* to *Perfection* will be inſufficient. For though, generally ſpeaking, ſuch is the Contrivance of Human Nature, that neither

ther the common Good of civil *Society*, nor the more particular Good of *private* Men, can be provided for, or ſecured, without the practice of ſociable and political *Virtues*; yet 'tis certain, that not only in many *extraordinary* Caſes there would be no *Reward* at all for *Virtue*, if there were not one reſerved for it in *another World*; but alſo in *moſt* Caſes, if there were not a *future* Pleaſure, that did infinitely outweigh the enjoyments of *this* Life, Men would ſee no *Obligation* to *Perfection*. For what ſhould raiſe them above the love of *this* World, if there were no *other*? Or above the love of the Body, if when they died they ſhould be no more for ever? And certainly our Minds would never be able to ſoar very high, nor ſhould we ever arrive at any Excellence or Perfection in any Action, if we were always under the influence of the love of the *World*, and the *Body*.

3. A *Life to come* is alone a ſufficient *Motive* to *Perfection*. Who will refuſe to *endure hardſhip as a good ſoldier of Chriſt Jeſus*, who firmly believes that *He* is now a Spectator, and will very ſuddenly come to be a Judge and Rewarder of his ſufferings? How natural is it to *run with patience the race that is ſet before us*, to him who has an Eternal Joy, an Eternal Crown alway in his Eye? And if a *Life to come* can

make a Man rejoice even in *suffering Evil*, how much more in *doing Good*? If it enable him to *Conquer* in the day of the Church's Trial and Affliction, how much more will it enable him to *abound* in all *Virtues* in the day of its Peace and Prosperity? How freely will a Man give to the diſtreſſed *Members of Chriſt*, who believes that he ſees *Chriſt* himſelf, ſtanding by, and receiving it as it were by their Hands, and placing it to his own account, to be repaid a thouſandfold in *the great day of the Lord*? How eaſily will a man allay the ſtorms of Paſſion, and caſt away the weapon of Revenge and Anger, with Indignation againſt himſelf, if his Faith do but preſent him often with a view of that *Canaan*, which the *meek in heart ſhall inherit* for ever? How importunately will a man pray for the Pardon of Sin, whoſe Senſe, whoſe Soul, whoſe Imagination is ſtruck with a dread of being for ever divided from God, and excluded from the Joys and Virtues of the Bleſſed? How fervently will a man pray for the Spirit of God, for the Increaſe of Grace, whoſe Thoughts are daily ſwallowed up with the Contemplation of an Eternity; and whoſe Mind is as fully poſſeſs d of the certainty and the Glory of *another World*, as of the emptineſs and vanity of *this*? How natural, finally,

finally, will it be to be poor in Spirit, and to delight in all the Offices of an unfeigned Humility, to that Man who has the Image of *Jesus washing the feet of his Disciples*, and a little after *Ascending* up into *Heaven*, alway before him?

But I know it will be here *Objected*, We *discern* not this Efficacy you attribute to this *Motive*. The Doctrine of *another Life* is the great *Article* of the Christian *Faith*, and it is every where Preached throughout *Christendom*; and yet Men generally seem to have as much fondness for *this* World, as they could were there no *other*: They practise no Virtues but such as are Profitable and Fashionable, or none any further than they are so. To this I *answer*, Though *most* act thus, there are *many*, I hope *very many*, who do otherwise; and that *all* in general do *not*, proceeds from want, either of due *Consideration*, or firm *Belief* of this Doctrine of another Life. *First*, From not *Considering* it as we should. 'Tis the greatest disadvantage of the Objects of *Faith*, compared with those of *Sense*, that they are distant and invisible. *He* therefore that will be *Perfect*, that will derive any Strength and Virtue from this *Motive*, must supply this distance by devout and daily *Contemplation*; he must fetch the re-

more Objects of *Faith* home to him; he must render them, as it were, present; he must see and feel them by the strength of *Faith*, and the force of *Meditation*; which if he do, then will his *Faith* certainly prove a vital and victorious *Principle*; then will no Pleasure in this World be able to combate the assured Hopes of an *Heaven*, nor any worldly Evil or Difficulty sustained for Virtue, be able to confront the Terrors of an *Hell*. *A Second* Reason why this *Motive* doth not operate as it should, is want of *Faith*. We doubt, we waver, we stagger, or take things upon trust; assenting very slightly and superficially to the Doctrine of *another Life*, and looking upon good works rather as not injurious to *this* World than serviceable to a *better*: And then 'tis no more wonder that the *unbelieving Christian* does not enter into Perfection and Rest, than that the *unbelieving Jew* did not: 'Tis no more wonder if the word of Life do not profit the *Christian* when *not believed* by him, than if it do not profit a *Pagan* who has *never heard* of it. And what is here said of *Infidelity*, is in its measure and proportion true when applied to a *weak* and *imperfect Faith*. *He* therefore that will be *Perfect* must daily pray, *Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief*. He must daily *Consider* the Grounds on which

which the Faith and Hope of a Chriſtian ſtand; the expreſs declarations of the Divine Will concerning the future Immortality and Glory of the Children of God; the demonſtration of this contained in the Reſurrection of Jeſus from the Dead, and his Aſcenſion, and Seſſion at the Right Hand of God: And to this he may add, the Love of God, the Merits of Jeſus, and the State and Fortune of Virtue in this World. From all which one may be able to infer the undoubted *certainty* of *another World.* The *Sum* of all amounts to *this*; whoever will be *Perfect*, muſt daily, I ſhould, I think, have ſaid, almoſt hourly ponder the *Bleſſedneſs* that attends *Perfection* in *another Life*; he muſt ponder it *ſeriouſly*, that he may be throughly perſuaded of it; he muſt ponder it *often*, that the Notions of it may be freſh and lively in his Soul.

SECT. II.

Of the ſeveral Parts *of* Perfection.

WHAT the ſeveral *Parts* of Religious *Perfection* are, will be eaſily diſcerned by a very ſlight Reflection, either on the *Nature* of *Man*, or the general *Notion* of *Perfection* already laid down. If we conſider *Man*, whoſe *Perfection* I am treating of, as it is plain that he is made up of *Soul* and *Body*, ſo 'tis as plain that Moral *Perfection* relates to the *Soul*, as the chief ſubject of it, and to the *Body* no otherwiſe than as the *Inſtrument* of that Righteouſneſs which is planted in the *Soul*. Now in the *Soul* of Man we find theſe three things; *Underſtanding*, *Will*, and *Affections*: In the Improvement and Accompliſhment of which, Human *Perfection* muſt conſequently conſiſt. And if we enquire wherein this Improvement or Accompliſhment lies, 'tis a truth ſo obvious that it will not need any proof, that *Illumination* is the *Perfection* of the *Underſtanding*, *Liberty* of the *Will*, and *Zeal* of the *Affections*. If, in the next place, we reflect upon the Deſcription I have before given of Perfection, nothing is more evident, than that

that to conſtitute a firm *Habit* of Righteouſneſs, three things are neceſſary: 1. The *Knowledge* of our *Duty*, and our Obligations to it. 2. The *Subduing* our *Luſts* and *Paſſions*, that we may be enabled to perform it. Laſtly, not only a free, but warm and vigorous *Proſecution* of it. In the *firſt* of theſe conſiſts *Illumination*; in the *ſecond*, *Liberty*; and in the *third*, *Zeal*. Upon the whole then 'tis evident, both from the *Nature* of *Perfection*, and of *Man*, that I am now to treat in order of theſe three things, *Illumination*, *Liberty* and *Zeal*, as ſo many Eſſential *Parts* of Religious *Perfection*. Nor muſt I ſtop here, but muſt to thoſe three unavoidably add *Humility*: For whether we conſider the Sins of the *Perfect* Man's paſt Life, or the ſlips and defects of his beſt State; or whether we conſider Man's continual dependence upon God in all reſpects, but eſpecially in reference to the Beginning, Progreſs, and Conſummation of his *Perfection*; or, whether, Laſtly, we conſider the ſcantineſs and deficiency, not only of this or that Man's *Perfection* in particular, but of Human *Perfection* in general, we cannot but conclude, that nothing can become Mortal Man (even though all the Excellence Human Nature is capable of were United in one) better than *Humility*. *Hu-*

mility therefore muſt begin and compleat Religious *Perfection*; it muſt accompany the Chriſtian in every Stage of his ſpiritual Progreſs; it muſt Crown all his Actions, and add that Beauty and Excellence, that Grace and Luſtre to all his other Virtues, that is wholly neceſſary to render them acceptable to God.

The general *Notion* of *Perfection* being thus reſolved into its *Parts*, 'tis plain I am now to Diſcourſe of *each* of theſe. And what I have to ſay on *each*, ought according to the ſtrict Rules of *Method*, to be compriſed within the *ſame* Chapter: But to conſult the *eaſe* and *benefit* of my *Reader*, I ſhall ſlight this Nicety, and diſtribute my Thoughts into as *many Chapters* as I ſhall judge moſt convenient for the eaſe and ſupport of the *Memory*.

CHAP.

CHAP. I.

Of Illumination, what *it conſiſts in.*

THE *Method* I have ſet my ſelf, obliges me here to Three things;

1. To ſtate the *Notion* of *Illumination*, and reſolve *what* it is:
2. To conſider the *Fruits* of it: And
3. To ſhew *how* it may be *obtained.*

§. 1. *What* it is. It happens in the point of *Illumination*, as it does in that of *Happineſs*: All Men at firſt hearing, form in general an agreeable and pleaſing *Notion* of it; all Men admire and love it; but few have any diſtinct and true Underſtanding of thoſe things which 'tis made up of. All Men conceive *Illumination* to be a ſtate of *Light* and *Knowledge*, as they do *Happineſs* to be a State of *Pleaſure*: But are as little agreed in particular, wherein conſiſts the Light or Knowledge which makes the *one*, as wherein conſiſts the Pleaſure that makes the *other*. The Luſt and Paſſion of ſome, the Superſtition and Prejudice of others; Curioſity and Confidence, Weakneſs and Deſign, Enthuſiaſm and Fancy, embroil and perplex

perplex all things. However, every honeſt Man hath a *Clue* by which he may eſcape out of this *Labyrinth*. The *Scripture* ſhines with bright and gracious Beams throughout all this Darkneſs: And if we will attend to it, we cannot wander into any dangerous miſtake. This deſcribes the ſtate of *Illumination* very plainly to us; calling it ſometimes *Wiſdom*, ſometimes *Knowledge and Underſtanding*; ſometimes *Faith*, ſometimes the *Spirit of Wiſdom* and *Revelation*. Next, it acquaints us with the *Deſign* and *End* of it; namely, to *convert us from the power of Satan to the ſervice of the living God*, to Purify and Sanctify us, to enable us to *approve the holy, acceptable, and perfect will of God*, and in one word, *to make us wiſe unto ſalvation*. Nay, it proceeds further, and points out to us particularly the *Truths* in the Knowledge of which *Illumination* conſiſts. Thus the *Old Teſtament* reckons *Wiſdom* to be, ſometimes the *Knowledge of God*, ſometimes the *Knowledge of his Law*, ſometimes the *Underſtanding of Proverbs and Parables*; theſe containing as it were the Soul of Moral Inſtruction, and wrapping up in few and lively Words, whatever the Experience of the Aged, or the obſervation of Men of the moſt piercing Judgment, thought beſt deſerved to be tranſmitted to Poſterity.

But

But all this amounts to the ſame thing, and all the Deſcriptions of *Wiſdom* in the *Old Teſtament* may be ſumm'd up into that one, *Job* 28. 28. *Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wiſdom, and to depart from evil is underſtanding.* The *New Teſtament* tells us, *This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom thou haſt ſent:* That *Chriſt is the way, the truth, and the life:* That *in him are hid all the treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge:* That true Underſtanding conſiſts in *knowing the will of God; which will is our ſanctification.* And when St. *Paul* underſtands by *Wiſdom*, as ſometimes he does, the penetrating into the Spirit and Myſtery, the Depths and Receſſes of the *Old Teſtament*, and diſcovering the great *Deſign* of *Man's Redemption*, carried on through all the Ages of the World, and through a wiſe variety of Diſpenſations, this alters not the *Notion* of *Illumination:* For this does not point out to us any new or different Truths; but only regards one peculiar way of explaining, or eſtabliſhing and confirming the great Chriſtian Doctrines. To conclude, We may eaſily learn what ſort of *Knowledge* the *Spirit of God* recommends to us above all other, from thoſe *Petitions* which St. *Paul* puts up for the *Epheſians* and *Coloſſians*. For the *Former* he Prays thus;

That

That the God of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the father of glory, may give unto you the ſpirit of wiſdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your underſtanding being enlightned, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the ſaints, and what is the exceeding greatneſs of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Chriſt, when he raiſed him from the dead, and ſet him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, &c. Eph. 1. 17, 18, 19, 20. For the *Latter* thus: *That ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wiſdom and ſpiritual underſtanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleaſing, being fruitful in every good work, and increaſing in the knowledge of God,* &c. Col. 1. 9, 10. If from theſe and the like *Texts* we form a general *Idea* of *Illumination*, it will be this: *Illumination* is a *State* of *Knowledge*, conſiſting in the aboliſhing or relinquiſhing thoſe *Errors*, which deprave and pervert our Affections, and undermine and ſupplant the Empire and Authority of Reaſon; and in entertaining and embracing thoſe *Truths*, which purify the one, and reſtore and eſtabliſh the other: All this in order to entitle us to the Favour of God, and a bleſſed Eternity. I might content

content my ſelf with this general Delineation of *Illumination*. But becauſe this is a Subject from which we cannot but reap ſo much Pleaſure and Advantage, as will abundantly requite whatever Labour can be beſtowed upon it; I will proceed to a *fuller* diſcovery of it, if I can.

Illumination then being a *State* of *Knowledge*, the *Object* of this *Knowledge* being *Truth*, 'tis plain, that in order to form a juſt and diſtinct *Notion* of *Illumination*, it will be neceſſary to inquire into *two* things: *Firſt*, What kind of *Truths*; and *Next*, what kind of *Knowledge* of theſe *Truths*, conſtitutes *Illumination*.

1. Of the *Truths* which *Illuminate*: We have many noble Characters in the *Old Teſtament* and the *New*, which diſtinguiſh *theſe* from *Truths* of an *inferior* Nature: All which are, I think, compriz'd by *Solomon* in very few words; Prov. 24 13, 14. *My ſon, ſaith he, eat thou honey, becauſe it is good; and the honey-comb, which is ſweet to thy taſte; ſo ſhall the knowledge of wiſdom be unto thy ſoul, when thou haſt found it; then there ſhall be a reward, and thy expectation ſhall not be cut off.* *Solomon* here, as is very uſual with *inſpired Writers*, does compare Spiritual with Corporeal Things, or illuſtrates the *one* by the *other*. He tells us, that

that what *Honey* is to the *Body*, that *Wisdom* is to the *Soul*: And recommending the *Former* from two incomparable Properties, its Ministring to *Health* and *Pleasure*, he recommends the *Latter* from Advantages, which bear indeed some *Resemblance*; but are as much *Superior* to these, as the *Soul* is to the *Body*. *My son, eat thou honey, because it is good*; i. e. because it both *cleanses* and *purges* all noxious Humours, and *nourishes* and *strengthens* the Body: *And the honey comb, because it is sweet to the taste*; which is the *second Excellence* of this sort of *Food*, namely, its *Pleasantness*; and properly urged to invite the Eater: Then proceeding to compleat the Comparison, he adds, *So shall the knowledge of wisdom be to thy soul, when thou hast found it*; i. e. it shall Minister to the *Purification*, *Strength*, and *Delight* of thy *Soul*. But this is not all: Though the Parallel can be extended no further between *Honey* and *Wisdom*; yet he does not think fit for that reason to omit *one* of the greatest *Excellencies* of *Wisdom*: And therefore he adds, *Then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off*. *Wisdom* does not only *perfect* and *entertain* our Minds; but also it gives us a Title to those *Rewards*, for the enjoyment of which it prepares and fits us. Here then we have from *Solomon* the

the true *Properties* of true *Wiſdom*: By theſe we may pronounce ſafely of all the different kinds of *Knowledge*; diſtinguiſhing the *precious* from the *vile*, and fixing the true *Eſtimate* of *Each*. If there be any ſort of *Truths*, whoſe *Knowledge* does not promote, but *obſtruct* theſe great Ends, *theſe* we are to deſpiſe and ſlight, to *ſhun* and *hate*. But if there be any *Knowledge*, that does *neither* oppoſe or hinder, *nor* yet contribute to theſe Ends, unleſs accidentally, and very remotely; for *this* we may have *ſome*, but *no* very *great* regard or eſteem. But whatever *Knowledge* that be, which is attended by theſe *Fruits*, *this* is that which we are *to ſearch for as for hidden treaſure*: This is that which, when we have found it, we are to value above *the Gold of Ophir*, *the Topaz* and *the Carbuncle*, and *all precious ſtones*. The diſtinguiſhing *Characters* then of *Illuminating Truths* are *four*:

1. They *Purify* us.
2. They *Nouriſh* and *Strengthen* us.
3. They *Entertain* and *Delight* us.
4. They procure us a glorious *Reward*.

1. They *Purify* us. This is a *Property*, which the *Royal Pſalmiſt* frequently attributes to the *Word of God*, that it is *pure* and

and *clean*, Pſal. 119. and elſewhere. And the *New Teſtament* frequently aſcribes to *Faith* and *Hope*, that they *purify* the Heart, 1 *Joh.* 3. 3. *Acts* 15. And this ſure is the firſt thing neceſſary to the *Perfecting* the Soul of Man. 'Tis with the *Soul*, as with the *Body*; it muſt be firſt *cleanſed* from hurtful Humours, before it can be *fed* and *nouriſhed*; *purged* of its Errors and Vices, ere it can be *enriched* with Divine Virtues, and *attain* that Liberty and Strength, wherein conſiſts the true Greatneſs and Excellence of the Mind of Man. The *firſt Step* towards the *Perfection* of *Virtue*, is the *relinquiſhing* our *Vice*; for *we muſt ceaſe to do evil, ere we can learn to do good*: And the *firſt Step* towards the *Perfection* of *Wiſdom*, is the *diſpelling* thoſe *Errors*, which deceive and miſlead the Mind, and pervert Life. *What* theſe were in the *Jew* and *Gentile*, and what they are at *this* day in *us*, it is eaſy enough to diſcern. The *Mind* of Man, as far as I can obſerve, is naturally *prone* to *Religious* Worſhip. Not only the conſideration of the wonderful Mechaniſm and Contrivance of the *World*, and of *Events*, ſtrange, ſudden, and unaccountable; but alſo the Conſcience of his own *Impotence* and *Obnoxiouſneſs*, inclining him to the Belief, and prompting him to ſeek the Patronage of an *Inviſible All-ſufficient* Power.

Power. In the next place, the Mind of *Man* is ever prone to propoſe to him ſome great, ſome ſovereign *Good*; in which he may acquieſce, and by which he may ſecure himſelf, as well as he can, againſt the Indigence and Poverty of his *Nature*, and the Changes and Revolutions, the Diſaſters and the Miſeries, to which this *Mortal State* is expoſed. Theſe are two things of that Importance, that no man can err in them, but the Error muſt prove fatal to his Repoſe. He that ſets up to himſelf for his ultimate End, an *empty* and *uncertain Good*, inſtead of a *Solid* and *Eternal* one, muſt needs be as miſerably deluded and diſappointed, as *he* muſt, who ſets up to himſelf a *falſe God* inſtead of the *true*; or goes about to endear and recommend himſelf to the *true*, by a *falſe* and *ſuperſtitious* Worſhip. Now in theſe points the *Jew* and *Gentile* were *miſerably*, though not *equally* miſtaken. The *Gentile* worſhipped *Devils*, inſtead of *God*. Their *Myſteries* were either ſenſual or cruel; their *Religion* did oftner encourage Sin than Virtue. And as to their ſovereign *Good*, their Hearts were ſet upon *this World*, upon the Pomp and Pleaſure, upon the Eaſe and Honour of it; and they had either none, or very dark and uncertain Proſpects beyond the *Grave*: All beyond it was an unknown

Region, full of Fables and idle Phantoms. The *Jews*, though they enjoy'd the *Oracles of God*, and generally preſerved the Worſhip of one *true* and *living God*, yet were they not free from very deplorable Errors relating to theſe Points: They ſeemed to have turned the *true God* into an *Idol*, and to have entertained ſome *Notions* of *Him* very repugnant to *his Nature*: They looked upon him as *the God of the Jews, not of the Gentiles*; as a *Reſpecter of Perſons*, as fond and *partial* to their Nation; and as delighted with a Religion, made up of numerous *Rites* and *Ceremonies*, and *external* Obſervances. And this could not but have a very ſad influence upon their *Religion*, as it really had: The *Holineſs* which is truly acceptable to God, being neglected and aboliſhed; and *Sadduciſm* or *Phariſaiſm*, i. e. *Senſuality* or *Hypocriſy*, introduced in the room of it. And as to their ultimate *End* or ſupream *Good*, the *Sadducees* denied the *Reſurrection*, *Angels* and *Spirits*; and therefore 'tis not to be expected they ſhould entertain any deſign above the Pleaſure of the *Body*. And though the *Phariſees* acknowledged *Angels* and a *Reſurrection*; yet can we not diſcern that they had a real value for any thing beſides the Honour, Power, and Wealth of this *World*. And no wonder, ſince they could, upon their

Principles,

Principles, ſatisfy themſelves in a *Religion*, which had nothing of internal *Purity* or ſolid *Righteouſneſs* in it. So that upon the whole, the *Jew* and *Gentile* were alike wicked: Only the Wickedneſs of the *Jews*, had this *Aggravation* in it above that of the *Gentiles*, that they enjoy'd the *Oracles of God*, and the Favour of a peculiar *Covenant*. This being the ſtate of *Darkneſs*, which lay upon the Face of the *Jewiſh* and *Gentile* World, our *Lord*, who was to be *a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Iſrael*, advanced and eſtabliſhed in the World that Doctrine, which directly tends to diſpel theſe Errors, and reſcue Mankind from the Miſery that attends them. For all that the *Goſpel* contains may be reduced to theſe *three* Heads: *Firſt*, the Aſſertion of *one* only true *God*, with a bright and full *Revelation* of his Divine *Attributes* and *Perfection*. *Secondly*, An Account of the *Will* of God, or the *Worſhip* he delights in, which is a *Spiritual* one, together with ſuitable *Means* and *Motives*; in which laſt is contained a full *Declaration* of *Man's* ſupream *Happineſs*. *Thirdly*, the *Revelation* of *one Mediator between God and man, the man Chriſt Jeſus; through whom we have acceſs with boldneſs to the throne of grace; through whom we have obtained from the father, grace, and pardon,*

and adoption; and through whom, *Laſtly*, all our Oblations and Performances are *acceptable* to Him. The *Deſign* of this glorious Manifeſtation was to *open* Mens *eyes*, to *turn them from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan to the living God: That they might obtain remiſſion of ſins*, and an *inheritance of glory*. Theſe then are the *truths* which *Illuminated* the *Gentile* and *Jewiſh* World: And theſe are the *truths* which muſt *Illuminate us* at *this* day. Theſe diſpel all deſtructive *Errors* that lead us to Vice or Miſery; Theſe point out our ſupream *Felicity*, and the direct *way* to it: Theſe open and enlarge the *Eye* of the *Soul*, enable it to diſtinguiſh and judge with an unerring *Exactneſs* between *Good* and *Evil*, between *Subſtantial* and *Superficial*, *Temporal* and *Eternal* Good. And I wiſh from my Soul, whatever *Light* we pretend to at *this Day*, we were well grounded and eſtabliſhed in *theſe Truths*. I doubt notwithſtanding our *Belief* of *one God*, and *one Mediator*; and notwithſtanding we are well enough aſſured, that *God* who is a *ſpirit*, *muſt be worſhipped in ſpirit and in truth*; and notwithſtanding our pretending to believe a *Life to come*; I ſay, I am afraid, that notwithſtanding theſe things, we do generally err in *two* main Points; namely, in the *Notion* we ought

to

to have of *Religion*, and the *value* we are to ſet upon the *World* and the *Body*. For who that reflects upon the Pomp and *Pride of Life*, upon the eaſe, the ſoftneſs and the luxury of it, upon the frothineſs and the freedom, the vanity and impertinence, to ſay no worſe, of *Converſation*, will not conclude, that either we have renounced our *Religion*, or form to our ſelves too complaiſant and indulgent a *Notion* of it? For is *this* the imitation of *Jeſus*? Is this to walk as *he* walked in the World? Can this be the Deportment of Men to whom the World and the Body is Crucified? Can ſuch a Life as this is, flow from thoſe Divine Fountains, *Faith*, *Love*, and *Hope*? *Who* again can reflect upon the Paſſion we diſcover for *Superiority* and *Precedence*, our thirſt of *Power*, our ravenous deſire of *Wealth*, and not conclude, that we have *miſtaken* our main *End*, that we ſet a wrong *value* upon *things*; and that whatever we talk of an *Eternity*, we look upon this *preſent* World as our *portion*, and moſt valuable *Good*? For can ſuch a tender concern for ſuch an eager purſuit after *temporal* things, flow from, nay conſiſt with, *purity of heart*, and *poverty of ſpirit*, the *love of God*, and a *deſire of heaven*? Whoever then will be *Perfect* or *Happy*, muſt carefully avoid both theſe *Errors*: He muſt never

think that *Religion* can ſubſiſt, without the ſtrength and vigor of our *Affections*: Or that the Bent and Vigor of our *Souls* can be pointed towards *God*, and yet the *Air* of our *Deportment* and *Converſation* be earthy, ſenſual, and vain, conformed even to a *Pagan Pride*, and *ſhew* of *Life*. *Next*, he muſt never cheriſh in himſelf the love of *this World*: He muſt never look upon himſelf other than a *Stranger and Pilgrim* in it: He muſt never be fond of the *Pleaſure* of it: He muſt never form vain *Deſigns* and *Projects* about it; nor look upon the beſt things in it, as *Ingredients* of our *Happineſs*, but only as *Inſtruments* of *Virtue*, or ſhort *Repaſts* and *Refreſhments* in our Journey. And becauſe all our *miſtakes* about the *Nature* and *Perfection* of *Religion*, and the *Value* of *Temporal* things do generally ariſe from Ἰδιότατος ἀπάτη, that *peculiar* Sin to which our *Conſtitution* betrays us; therefore the *Knowledge* of *our ſelves*, an intimate *Acquaintance* with all our natural *Propenſions* and *Infirmities*, is no inconſiderable Part of *Illumination*. For we ſhall never addreſs our ſelves heartily to the *Cure* of a *Diſeaſe* which we know *nothing* of, or to the *rectifying* any *Inclination*, till we are thoroughly convinced that 'tis *irregular* and *dangerous*.

2. The

2. The *Second* Character of *Illuminating Truths* is, that they are ſuch as *feed* and *nouriſh*, *corroborate* and *improve* the Mind of Man. Now the Properties of *Bodily* ſtrength are ſuch as theſe: It enables us to baffle and repel Injuries, to bear Toil and Travel, to perform difficult Works with ſpeed and eaſe; and finally, it prolongs Life to a much further date, than weak and crazy Conſtitutions can arrive at. And of all theſe we find ſome *Reſemblances* in *Spiritual Strength*; but as much more *Perfect* and Excellent, as the *Spirit* is above the *Body*. *Thoſe Truths* then are indeed *Illuminating*, which enable us to vanquiſh *Temptations*, to *endure* with Conſtancy and Patience the Toils and Hardſhips of our Chriſtian *warfare*, to diſcharge the *Duties* of our Station with Zeal and Vigor; and which Laſtly, render us firm, ſteddy, and immortal. And theſe are the glorious effects which are attributed to the *Truths of God*. Hence is the *Goſpel* called the *power of God unto ſalvation*, Rom. 1. 16. and hence it is, that we *read of the armour of God*, Epheſ. 6. 11. *The ſword of the ſpirit, the ſhield of faith, the breaſt plate of righteouſneſs*, &c. to intimate to us the *Strength* and Virtue of the *Word of God*, and that it brings with it ſafety and ſucceſs. And hence it is, that the *Word of*

God is ſaid to *quicken* and *ſtrengthen*; that *man* is ſaid *to live, not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*; that *righteouſneſs* is called *everlaſting*; and that he that *doth the Will of God* is affirmed to *abide for ever*: To teach us plainly, that there is nothing ſteddy and unalterable, nothing durable, nothing eternal, but *God, Divine Truths*, and *thoſe* that are *formed* and *moulded* by them.

There are *Truths* indeed which are meerly *Barren* and *Unactive*, which amuſe and ſuſpend the Mind, but never benefit it: but there are *others* which are, in the Language of *Solomon*, like *health to the navel, and marrow to the bones*: Wiſdom and Virtue, Life and Honour, the Favour of God and Man, attend them where e're they dwell. And theſe are the *Truths* which *Illuminate*: Truths that are Active and Fruitful; that make us wiſe and good, perfect and happy: Such as we have a mighty Intereſt in, ſuch as have a ſtrong Influence upon us, ſuch as give a new *Day* to the Underſtanding, and new Strength and Liberty to the Will; ſuch as raiſe and exalt our Affections, and render the whole Man more rational, more ſteddy, more conſtant, more uniform. *Theſe* are the *Truths* which make Men great and modeſt in Proſperity, erect and courageous in Adverſity; always content with *this* World,

World, yet alway full of the Hopes of a *better*: Serene, Calm, and well aſſured in the *preſent* ſtate of their Souls, and yet thirſting after *Perfection*, *Maturity*, and the abſolute *Conſummation* of Righteouſneſs in the *World to come*. Now the *Truths* that effect all this, are all reducible to thoſe which I have mentioned under the former Head: For in thoſe we find all that is *neceſſary to life and godlineſs*, to *virtue* and *glory*; in thoſe we find all that is neceſſary to raiſe and ſupport true *Magnanimity*, to enlarge and free the Mind, and to add Strength and Courage to it. For what can more certainly promote all this, than *Immortality and Glory?* What can be a ſurer Foundation for the Hope of both to reſt on, than the Favour of *God* himſelf? And what can more effectually reconcile and ingratiate us with *God*, than ſincere univerſal *Righteouſneſs*, and the *Mediation* of his dearly Beloved *Son?*

3. The *Third* Character of *Illuminating Truths* is, that they are *Pleaſant* and *Agreeable* to the Soul. Hence it is that the *Royal Pſalmiſt* pronounces the *Word of God ſweeter than the honey and the honey comb:* That he aſcribes to it *Delight* and *Joy*; For he tells us, that *it rejoices the heart*, that *it enlightens the eyes*. And accordingly we find the true Servants of God, not only

only continually bleſſing and praiſing God in the *Temple*, but magnifying him by *Pſalms* and *Hymns* in their *Priſons*, and *rejoicing* in the midſt of *Tribulation*. But when I reckon *Pleaſure* and *Delight* amongſt the *Fruits* of *Illumination*, I muſt add, that there is a vaſt difference between the *Fits* and *Flaſhes* of *Mirth*, and the ſerenity of a *Fixt* and *Habitual Delight*; between the *Titillations* of *Senſe*, and the ſolid *Joys* of the *Mind*; and laſtly, between the *Pleaſures* of *Fancy*, and of *Reaſon*. And when I ſay, *Illumination* conſiſts in the *Knowledge* of *pleaſant* and *agreeable Truths*, I mean it of *rational* Pleaſure, an *habitual* Tranquility of the Mind: And then the Matter is beyond Queſtion. Whatever *Truths* do contribute to promote *this*, the Study and Contemplation of *them*, muſt be our true *Wiſdom*. Joy, when 'tis ſolid and rational, does enlarge and exalt the Mind of Man: 'Tis, as it were, *health to the navel, and marrow to the bones*; it renders us more thankful to God, more kind and courteous to Man. 'Tis an excellent *Preparation* to invite more *Plentiful* Influxes of the *Spirit of God*. Hence did *Elijah* call for a *Muſical Inſtrument*, when he deſired to *Propheſy*: And we find the Company of *Prophets* rejoicing with *Hymns*, *Muſick* and *Dances*; all *outward* Teſtimonies of the *inward*

ward Tranſports and Raviſhments of their *Minds*. And as I am perſuaded that that which diſtinguiſhes a *Godly* ſorrow, from a *Worldly* or *Impious* one, *Repentance* and *Contrition*, from the Agonies and Perplexities of *Deſpair*, is the *peace and tranquility* which attends it; ſo am I perſuaded, that God does preſs and invite us to *Mourning* and *Sorrow* for *Sin*, for *this* reaſon, not excluding *others*, becauſe it naturally leads on to *Peace* and *Joy*: A ſoft and tender *Sorrow* diſſipating the Fears and Diſtreſſes of *Guilt*, like mild and fruitful *Showers* that do lay *Storms*. In a word, there is no ſuch powerful Antidote againſt *Sin*, nor ſpur to Holy *Induſtry*, as Holy *Pleaſure*, Pious *Joy*, or Spiritual *Peace* and *Tranquility*. This is a Partaking or Anticipating *the powers of the World to come*; and the mightieſt Corroboration of every thing that is good in us. The Study then of *ſuch Truths*, is true *Wiſdom*. And *Illumination* thus far will conſiſt in quitting thoſe *Errors*, which beget Melancholy, Superſtition, Deſparation; and in ſuch *Truths*, as enlarge our view of the Divine Perfections, and exhibit to us a nearer Preſence of his Goodneſs and Glory: *Such*, again, as unfold the Dignity of Human Nature, and the wiſe and gracious Ends of our Creation; *Such*, Laſtly, as extend our Proſpect,

pect, and enlarge our Hopes; ſupport our Frailties, and excite our Vigor.

4. The *laſt property* of thoſe *Truths* in the Knowledge of which *Illumination* conſiſts, is, that they are ſuch as procure us a *Reward.* If we reflect upon thoſe *three* Heads, under which I ranged thoſe *Truths*, which *Illuminated* the *Gentile* and *Jewiſh* World, we ſhall eaſily diſcern how well they fit this Character: They fill the Mind with *Joy* and *Peace*, and make it abound in *Hope*; they Purge the Man from his natural Corruption, and fortify the Mind againſt ſuch Impreſſions, from outward Good or Evil in this World, as diſquiet and torment the Sinner; they procure him the Protection of God's Providence, and the Aſſiſtance of his Spirit in *this* Life; and they invite him to hope for Glories and Pleaſures in *another*, far above any thing that *the heart of man can conceive. God* is *the God of hope*; He has all *fulneſs* and *Sufficiency* in *himſelf:* And therefore *Bleſſed* muſt all *they be, who have the Lord for their God. Jeſus* is the Fountain of all *Conſolation: He is made unto us of God, wiſdom, and righteouſneſs, and ſanctification, and redemption*: Happy is he that does *rejoice* always, and *glory* in *him. Righteouſneſs* is a ſtate of *Health* and *Strength*, of *Perfection* and *Beauty*, of *Peace* and *Tranquility*, of

of *Reſt* and *Hope*: *Bleſſed* are they who are poſſeſſed of it, who are made *free from ſin, and become ſervants of God*; who *have their fruit unto holineſs, and the end everlaſting life.* Such are already *paſt from death to life*; for *the ſpirit of life and holineſs, of God and glory, reſts upon them.* This is the Character that diſtinguiſhes *Goſpel* Knowledge from all *other* ſorts of Knowledge. No knowledge of *Arts* or *Sciences*, and much leſs the moſt exquiſite knowledge of all the *Myſteries* of the *Kingdom of Darkneſs*, can pretend to an Eternal *Reward.* A ſhort and impure *Pleaſure*, and a tranſient *Intereſt*, is all that *this* ſort of *Knowledge* can beſtow, and very often, inſtead of *Pleaſure* and *Profit*, it requites its Diſciples with *Pain* and *Trouble.* The *Goſpel* only contains thoſe *Truths*, which confer *Life and Immortality* on thoſe that Believe and Obey them. 'Tis the *Goſpel* alone that teaches us how we are to gain the Love and Favour of *God*; and 'tis *God* alone who *Rules* and *Governs* the viſible and inviſible *World.* *He* therefore alone is to be *fear'd*, and *He* alone is to be *loved. Fear not them*, ſaith our *Saviour*, Matt. 10. 28. *which kill the body, but are not able to kill the ſoul; but rather fear him who is able to deſtroy both ſoul and body in hell.* And St. *John* gives the *ſame Precept* concerning the

the *World*: *Love not the world, neither the things of the world*: And backs it by the *ſame reaſon*; *for the world paſſeth away, and the luſt thereof*: *But he that doth the will of God, abideth for ever.* That is, the *World* can at beſt but gratify for a *moment* the Appetites of the *Body*, or the Deſires of a ſenſual *Fancy*; therefore *love* it *not*; but *love* the *Father*, who after the diſſolution of the vital Union betwixt *Soul* and *Body*, is able to confer *Life* and *Happineſs* on *both* to all *Eternity*.

Thus have I conſidered the *Characters* of *Illuminating Truths*. And the *whole* of what I have ſaid amounts to theſe *two* things. 1. There are *Truths* of very *different* kinds: *Truths* that are of *no uſe*; ſuch are thoſe which are either *trifling* or meerly *notional*, and can have no Influence on Human Life: *Truths* that are of *ill uſe*; ſuch are thoſe of which conſiſts the Arts of *Senſuality*, *Avarice*, *Vanity* and *Ambition*: *Theſe* are to be *deteſted*, the *former* to be *contemned* by all that ſeek after true *Wiſdom*. *Again*, there are *Truths* of an *inferior uſe*; ſuch as concern our *Fortunes*, our *Relations*, our *Bodies*; and theſe may be allowed their *proper place*, and a *reaſonable Value*. But the *Truths* which concern the Peace and Pleaſure, Strength and Liberty, of our *Souls*; which procure us the

the *Favour* of *God*, and the *Grace* of his *Spirit*; the *Truths*, in a word, which ſecure our *Temporal* and *Eternal* Happineſs; theſe are *Illuminating Truths*, theſe have a *tranſcendent* worth, and *ineſtimable* Excellence, or Uſefulneſs, and conſequently can never be too *dear* to us. 2. Since the great *Characters* of *Illuminating Truths* do exactly *fit* the *Goſpel of Jeſus*, 'tis plain, that *this* is that *Syſteme* of *Knowledge*, which we are to *Study day and night*; *this* is that *Divine Philoſophy*, whoſe *Principles* and *Laws* we muſt inceſſantly revolve and ponder. 'Tis not without reaſon, that the *Pſalmiſt* beſtows ſuch glorious *Elogies* upon the *word of God*, *Pſal.* 19. and elſewhere: That he magnifies, one while the intrinſick Excellence and Beauty, another while the Force and Efficacy of it; and ever and anon, enlarges himſelf upon the advantages, the unſpeakable advantages, which reward the Meditation and Practice of it. *Of all Perfections I have ſeen an end: but thy commandments are exceeding broad. They are pure, they endure for ever; they enlighten the eyes, and rejoice the heart. Moreover by them thy ſervant is warned; and in keeping of them there is great reward.* That is, by them we are preſerved from all *real Evil*, and put in poſſeſſion of, or entitled to, all *real Good*. How well

well did St. *Peter* anſwer, when our *Lord* asked his Diſciples, *Will ye alſo go from me? Lord, whither ſhall we go? Thou haſt the words of eternal life.* And how wiſely did St. *Paul* reſolve, *to know nothing but Chriſt Jeſus and him crucified? For he is the way, the truth, and the life*; and in *him are hid all the treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge.*

But after all, as there is a *Form of Godlineſs*, ſo there is a *Form of Knowledge*, without the *power* of it. The Knowledge of the *ſame Truths*, as I obſerved in the beginning, in *different Perſons*, may be very *different*, as meeting with a very *different Reception.* Our *Conceptions* may be more clear, or confuſed, more lively, or faint, more perfect, or maimed: And our *Aſſent* may be ſtronger or weaker. In *ſome* they may only float ſuperficially, in *others* they may penetrate deeper: And the Degrees of their *Influence* and *Operation*, will be certainly proportioned to the different manner of their *Reception.* For this reaſon it will be neceſſary to the right underſtanding of a *ſtate* of *Illumination*, to Diſcourſe

2. Of the *Nature* of that *Knowledge* we muſt have of the *Former Truths*; to ſhew, *what* ſort of *Conception* we muſt form of them, what kind of *Aſſent* we muſt pay them, and what kind of *Conſideration* we muſt employ about them. As I have there-

therefore laid down the *Properties* of thoſe *Truths*, ſo will I now lay down the *Properties* of that *Knowledge of them*, which is Eſſential to *Illumination*.

1. *Illuminating Knowledge* muſt be deeply *rooted*. This our *Saviour* has taught us in that *Parable*, wherein he has obſerved to us, that the *ſeed which had not depth of earth*, as it *ſoon ſprung up*, ſo it *ſoon withered* and *dryed away*. We often know (or pretend to do ſo,) the *Rudiments* of our Religion, without the *Grounds* and *Foundation* of it. We embrace *Concluſions*, without examining the *Principles* from whence they flow; and contrary to the advice of the *Apoſtle*, we are *unable to give a reaſon to any one that asketh us of the faith, and the hope that is in us*. And then *ours* is not properly *Knowledge*, but *Opinion*; 'tis not *Faith*, but *Credulity*: 'Tis not a firm *Perſuaſion*, but an *eaſy cuſtomary* Aſſent. And this is overthrown by every *Temptation*; defaced or much blur'd by every *Atheiſtical ſuggeſtion* or *Prophane Objection*. Does the *World* or our *Luſt* tempt us, as the *Devil* did our *Firſt Parents*, *Ye ſhall not ſurely die?* How eaſily is that *Faith* ſhaken, which is *no better founded?* How eaſily is a Man induced to Hope, that *Sin* is not very *fatal* and *pernicious*, that *God* will eaſily be prevailed with to *pardon* it, that the *Flames of Hell* are *Meta-*

phorical, and its *Eternity* a *miſtaken* Notion and *groundleſs* Fancy, if he be ignorant of the true *Reaſons of God's Wrath* and *Indignation*, which are founded in the very *Nature of God* and *Sin*? Whereas on the *other* hand, he that well underſtands *both* theſe; the Deformity and Tendency of Sin, and the Holineſs and the Purity of the Divine Nature, cannot but *diſcern* an irreconcilable *Oppoſition* between them; and be convinced, that were there *no Tribunal* erected for the *Sinner*, yet would *Sin* be its *own Puniſhment*; and that an intolerable *Hell*, conſiſting in the *diſorder of Nature*, an *excluſion from God*, &c. would be the natural and neceſſary *Iſſue* of it. The *ſum* of this Argument *is*, *That Knowledge*, which has no deep *root*, is ſubject to be overthrown by every *blaſt*: *That Faith* which is little more than *Credulity*, does very ſeldom ſtand againſt any very rude *ſhock*. Now the *Grounds* of our *Faith* and *Duty* are fully and clearly expounded in the *Goſpel*: And *here* eſpecially we muſt *ſeek* them. When I ſay *this*, I reject no *Collateral* Arguments, I refuſe no *Foreign* Aids, which contribute any thing to *confirm* and *fortify* our Belief of *Goſpel Truths*. The *Faith* of St. *Thomas* did, in part at leaſt, depend upon the Evidence of *ſenſe*. Thomas, *becauſe thou 'haſt ſeen thou haſt believed*,

believed, John 20. 29. And so did that of the *rest* of them, who were *Eye-witnesses* of the *Resurrection* and *Ascention* of the *Blessed Jesus*. The *Doctrine* of *one God*, and a *Judgment to come*, may receive much *light* and *strength* from *natural Reason*: And whatever *establishes* a *revealed Truth*, will be so far from diminishing, that it will increase the *Virtue* and *Efficacy* of it. All the *Caution* I think fit to give here is, that we be sure that the Ground be plain and firm, on which we build the Belief of an *Illuminating Truth*. *Philosophy*, in many cases is clear and convictive: St. *Paul* himself amongst the *Gentiles* frequently appeals to *Reason*. But too often we call our *Fancy Philosophy*; and obtrude upon the World, the wild and undigested *Theories* of a warm and confident *Imagination*, for new *Discoveries*. What strange *stuff* was *Gnostick Philosophy once*? What did it produce but the *Corruption* of the *Christian Faith*? And what can be expected from *Mystick*, *Enthusiastick Philosophy* or *Divinity* in *any* Age, any Man may guess, without any deep Penetration. Nor do I doubt but that all judicious and experienced Men, do as much despise and nauseate the Blendures and Mixtures of pretended *Philosophy* with our *Faith* and *Morals*, as the World generally does the *subtilties* and *perplexities* of the *Schools*.

For my part, I can't endure to have my *Religion* lean upon the rotten *props* of *particular* Notions. I admire, I love the *Elevations* and *Enlargements* of Soul: But I can have no value for unaccountable *Amusements* or *Rambles* of *Fancy*. An itch of *Novelty* or *Curiosity* has a Tincture in it of our *Original Corruption*. I ever suspect an *Opinion* that carries an *Air* of *Novelty* in it; and do always prefer a *vulgar Truth* before *refined Error*. They are *vulgar Truths*, which like *vulgar Blessings* are of *most use* and *truest worth*. And surely our *Saviour* thought so, when he *thanked his father, that he had hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes*. And when he himself taught the People *with power and authority, and not as the Scribes*, he did advance no subtil *Theories*, but bright and dazling, useful and convictive *Truths*. This minds me of another *property* of *Illuminating Knowledge*.

2. This *Knowledge* must not be obscure and confused, but *Distinct* and *Clear*. Where the Images of things are slight, faint and vanishing, they move Men but very weakly, and affect them but very coldly; especially in such Matters as are not subject to our Senses. And this I persuade my self is one chief *Reason why* those glorious and wonderful *Objects*, God, a

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Judgment to come, *Heaven* and *Hell*, do ſtrike us ſo *faintly*, and operate ſo *little*. We have generally no lively, diſtinct and clear *Conception* of them: It being otherwiſe impoſſible, That things in their own *Nature dreadful* and *amazing*, ſhould excite in us *no Fear*; or that things in their own *Nature* infinitely *amiable*, ſhould enkindle in us *no Paſſion*, *no Deſire*. The *Notions* we have of *Spiritual* and *Inviſible* Things are *dim*, *dusky* and *imperfect*: Our *Thoughts* paſs over them ſo *ſlightly*, that they ſcarce retain any *print* or *traces* of them. Now this ſort of *Knowledge* will never do the work. Theſe drowſy notices of things will never ferment and raiſe our *Paſſions* for *Heaven* high enough to confront and combat thoſe we have for the *World*. From hence we may give a fair account, what the uſe is of *Prophetick Retirement*, and *Prophetick Eloquence*: What is the purpoſe of all thoſe *Schemes* and *Tropes*, which occur in *inſpired Writings*: And why the beſt of Men have ever ſo much affected *Solitude* and *Retreats*, from the noiſe and the hurry of the World. Serious, frequent, and devout *Contemplation* is neceſſary to form in our Minds, clear, diſtinct and ſprightly *Notions*: And to *communicate* theſe well to the World, they muſt be expreſſed in *moving* Language,

in *living* Tropes and Figures. Ah! Did we but consider this, we should sure allot more *time* to the *study* of *Divine Truths*; and we should not think that to discover them *throughly*, it were enough to let our Thoughts *glance* upon them. But we should survey and ponder them with all the *exactness* and *diligence* that were necessary to make lasting and distinct *impressions* upon us. Could we know by *Intuition*, doubtless wonderful *Objects* would raise very extraordinary *Passions* in us. But this we cannot, let us come as near it as we can: Only let us avoid forming *absurd* and *false* Notions of things, whilst we endeavour after *distinct* and *clear* ones. *Spiritual* things do not answer *Corporeal*, like *Face* to *Face* in a Glass: And therefore, though to give some light to things that are *above* us, we may find out all the *Resemblances* of them we can in *those* things we are acquainted with *here below*; yet we must still remember, that the *one* do vastly exceed the *other*, and that we cannot thus get a just and adequate *Notion* of them.

3. This *Knowledge* must not lie in the Understanding, *crude* and *undigested*; but it must be throughly *concocted* and turned into *Nourishment*, *Blood*, and *Spirit*. We must know the true *value* and *use* of every *Principle*, of every *Truth*, and be able rea-

dily to *apply* them. For what does it ſignify, how important *Truths* are in *themſelves*, if they are not ſo to me? What does it avail that they are impregnated with *Life* and *Power*, if I *feel* not any ſuch Influence? Of what uſe is the Knowledge of *Goſpel Promiſes* to *me*, if I reap no *Comfort* from them? Or the Knowledge of *Goſpel Threats*, if they are unable to *curb* and *reſtrain* my Paſſions? And ſo is it with other *Truths*: What will it avail me that I *know*, the *life of man conſiſts not in the multitude of the things which he poſſeſſes*, if notwithſtanding I *cannot content* my ſelf with a *Competency*? That *Righteouſneſs* is the chief *Good*, and the richeſt *Treaſure* of the Soul of Man; if notwithſtanding I ſeek *this World*, and the *things* of it, with a more *early* and *paſſionate* Concern? That *ſin* and *pain* are the moſt *conſiderable*, if not *only Evils* of Man; if notwithſtanding I be *caſt down* and *broken* under every *Adverſity*? And thus I might go on, and ſhew you, that the *Knowledge* which is not digeſted into *Nouriſhment* is, if not a burden, of no benefit to us. 'Tis plain, *that* is to *me* nothing worth, which I make *no uſe* of. We muſt then follow the advice of *Solomon*, and never quit the Search and Meditation of *Truth*, till we grow *intimate* and *familiar* with it; and

so have it always ready for a *Guide* and *Guard* for our *Support* and *Strength*, and for our *Delight* and *Pleasure*. We must *bind it about our heart*, as he speaks, and *tie it as an ornament about our neck. Then, when we go forth, it shall lead us, when we sleep, it shall keep us, and when we awake, it shall talk with us: For the commandment is a Lamp, and the Law is light, and reproofs of Instruction are the way of life*, Prov. 6. In a word, nothing can render the most important *Truths* powerful and operative in us, but such a *Digestion* of them by serious and devout *Meditation*, as may in a manner *incorporate* them with us. And this the *Scripture* plainly teaches, when to signify the Force and Virtue of the *Gospel*, above that of the *Law*, it uses these words: *For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts*, Heb. 8. 10. intimating, that no *Laws*, no *Principles* can ever influence us, till they be deeply *imprinted* in our Hearts.

To *wind up* all. There are *several* kinds of *Knowledge* of the *same Truths*. There is a *Knowledge* which serves us, only as *Pisga's* top did *Moses*; to *shew* us *Canaan*, but not to *bring us* into it. There is, again, a *Knowledge* which serves us only as the *Ta-*

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lent did the *wicked Servants* use not to procure *Rewards*, but *Punishments*. And finally, there is a *Knowledge*, which like the *Talents* in the Hand of the *Faithful* and *good Steward*, *enriches* us *first*, and *recommends* us *afterwards* to *higher* Trusts and Dignities; which *improves* and *perfects* our *Nature* first, and then puts us into *possession* of such *Blessings*, as only *Nature* thus *improved* and *perfected* is *capable* of. And this *Knowledge* must not be a slight, superficial, and undigested one; it must not be a confused and obscure, a weak and imperfect one: *This* is *not the Knowledge* which will bring forth those excellent *fruits*, which we have reason to expect from true *Illumination*. But it must be a *Knowledge* that has all the quite *contrary* Characters. Even such as I have *before* described at large. That *this* is an *Observation* of the *greatest* weight and moment is *evident* to any one, who will give himself leave to make any *Reflection* on the *present* State of *Christianity*. For how does the Power of *Darkness* prevail, amidst the *Light* of the Gospel? How has the *Devil* erected *his Throne* in the midst of that *Church*, which should be the *Kingdom of God*? And Sin and Death *reign* where Life and Immortality are *Preached*? *Whence* is this? Are Men *ignorant* of those *Truths* which make up the

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Systeme of true *Wisdom?* *This* is *not* easy to be *imagined*; scarcely of the darkest corners of the *Popish* Churches; much less of *ours*. And therefore we must conclude, that this is because our *Knowledge* is not *such* as it *ought* to be, with respect to its *clearness*, *certainty*, and *Digestion*.

CHAP. II.

Of the Fruits *and* Attainment *of* Illumination.

HAving dispatched the *Notion* of *Illumination* in the foregoing *Chapter*, and shew'd both what *Truths*, and what sort of *Knowledge* of them is requisite to it; I am next to treat,

1. Of the *Fruits*. And
2. Of the *Attainment* of it.

§. 1. As to the *Fruits* of *Illumination*, I have the less need to insist upon *them*, because whatever can be said on *this* Head, has been in a manner *anticipated*: All the Characters of *Illuminating Truth* and *Illuminating*

nation. Knowledge being such as sufficiently declare the blessed *effects* of *true Illumination*, I will therefore be very *short* on *this Head*; and only just *mention two Advantages* of *Illumination*. As the use of *Light* is especially *twofold*, to *Delight* and *Guide* us; so do we reap *two benefits* from *Illumination*.

1. The *first* and most immediate one is, That it *sets* the whole Man, and the whole Life *right*; that it fixes our *Affections* on their proper and natural *Object*, and directs all our *Actions* to their true *End*. I do not mean that the *Understanding* constantly and necessarily *influences* and *determines* the *Will*. *Experience* tells us, that we have a *sad Liberty*. That our *Affections* are too often *Independent* of our *Reason*; that we *sin* against the Dictates of *Conscience*; that we pursue *false Pleasure*, and a *false Interest*, in opposition to the *true*, and in plain *opposition* to our *Judgment* too; at least to a *secret* and *calm* one. And the *Reason* of all this is, because we consist of *two* different and repugnant *Principles*; a *Body* and a *Soul*: And are solicited by *two* different *Worlds*, a *temporal* and an *eternal* one. But all this notwithstanding, 'tis certain that *Illumination* in the Mind has a mighty Influence upon us: For it is con-

continually exciting in us wise *Desires* and excellent *Purposes*: 'Tis always alluring and inviting us towards our Sovereign *Good*, and restraining and deterring us from *Sin* and *Death*: It alarms, disquiets, disturbs and persecutes us, as often as we err and wander from the Path of Life. In one word, the great *Work* of *Illumination* is, to be always representing the Beauties and Pleasures, and the Beatitude and Glory of *Virtue*; and remonstrating the Evils and Dishonours, the Deformities and Dangers of *Vice*: So that a Man will never be at *rest*, who has this *Light* within him, till he be either *extinguished* or *obeyed*.

2. This *Light* within us, if it be followed and complied with, not muddied and disturbed; if it be not quenched and extinguished by wilful Sin, or unpardonable Oscitancy and Remissness; if in a word, its influence be not interrupted, disperses all our *Fears* as well as *Errors*; creates an unspeakable *Tranquility* in the Soul; spreads over us a calm and glorious *Sky*, and makes every thing in us and about us look *gay* and *verdant* and *beautiful*. The *Dissipation* of *Pagan Darkness*, and all Participations or Resemblances of it; *Deliverance* from a state of *Bondage* and *Wrath*; the *Peace of God*, the *Love of Jesus*, the *Fellowship*

lowship of the Holy Ghost, the *Immortality* of the *Soul*, the *Resurrection* of the *Body*, the *Perfection* and *Blessedness* of *Eternity*. *Good God!* What surprizing, what ravishing *Themes* are these, for the Thoughts of an *enlightened* Soul to dwell upon! Blessed and Happy is he who enjoys this *Pleasure* upon Earth. And that *we may*, I am now to Discourse;

§. 2. Of the *Attainment* of *Illumination*. Now whatever advice can relate to *this*, may be reduced under *two* Heads:

1. *What Qualifications* do render Man *capable* of *Illumination*.

2. *What* it is that one duly qualified is to *do* in *Pursuit* of it.

§. 3. To begin with the *Qualifications* requisite to *Illumination*. *One* Man is distinguished from *another* several ways: By his *Estate* or *Fortune*; by *Natural* or *Acquired Endowments*; and by *Moral Dispositions*: And each of these may have some, though a very different Influence upon Human *Perfection*. For if we enquire after only the *Essence* and *Integrity of Perfection*; then are there *two* or *three Moral Qualifications*, which are all that is required in order to this: But if we enquire after the

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largeness of its Stature, the *Symmetry* of its Features, the *Lustre* of its Complexion, and the *Elegance* of its Dress; then may we allow something to be ascribed to *Fortune*, to *Nature*, and a liberal *Education*. This is an *Observation* very *necessary* to be made. For though *every* Man may be *capable* of *Perfection*, that is, *Habitual Holiness*, if it be not his own fault; yet is not *every* Man capable of being *equally Perfect*, because of that accidental *Variety* which I have suggested, and which flows from *different Gifts of God*, which depend *not* on *our selves*. This being premised in order to prevent my being mistaken, I proceed and determine.

1. That *Illumination* depends not upon a Man's *outward Fortune*. There are indeed *several* sorts of *Knowledge* which we can never arrive at without much *leisure*, and much *expence*: And in order to support the one, and enjoy the other, it is requisite that we be Masters of a *good Fortune*. Hence is that *Observation* of the *Author of Ecclesiasticus*, Chap. 38. 24. *The wisdom of a learned man cometh by opportunity of leisure; and he that hath little business shall become wise.* And therefore in the following Verses, he excludes the *Husbandman*, the *Statuary*, the *Engraver*, the *Smith*,

Smith, the *Porter*; and all consequently whose Time and Mind is taken up in the *Labours* of their *Profession*, and in making the necessary *Provision* for *Life*; these, I say, he excludes from all Pretensions to *Wisdom*. *How can he get wisdom that holdeth the plough, and that glorieth in the goad; whose talk is of bullocks?* &c. But *this* is not the *Wisdom* that I am enquiring after, and which constitutes *Illumination*. *That* consists not in the Laws of our *Earthly*, but *Heavenly* Country: Not in *Arts* and *Sciences* which relate to the *Body*, and minister to a *temporal* Life; but in those *Divine Truths* which purify the *Soul*, and minister to an *Eternal* one: No, not in *Notional Improvements* of the *Mind*, but in *Spiritual* and *Vital ones*. And therefore the *Husbandman* and the *Artist*, the *Mechanick* and the *Trader*, are as capable of this sort of *Wisdom*, as the Man of *Office*, *Money* or *Quality*. There needs no *Wealth* to render one *the Child of Light and of the Day*. There is the *Book of Nature*; the *Book of Revelation*; *both* the *Books of God*, *both writ* throughout with glorious *Illuminating* Truths: *These* lie wide *open* to every honest Christian. The Being and Nature of God; the Mediation of Jesus, and a Judgment to come; the Nature and Necessity of Holiness, are fully *revealed*, and

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unanſwerably *proved*. And though *every* honeſt Man be not able to diſcover *all* the *Arguments* on which they ſtand, yet may he diſcover *enough*: And what is more, he may have an *inward, vital, ſenſible* proof of them; he may *feel* the *Power*, the *Charms* of *Holineſs*; *experiment* its *Congruity* and *Lovelineſs* to the *Human* Soul; and obſerve a thouſand Demonſtrations of its *ſerviceableneſs* to the *Honour* of God, and the *good* of *Mankind*: He may have a full, a convictive ſenſe of the *Manifeſtation* of the *Divine Perfections* in the great work of our *Redemption*; and the excellent *Tendency* of it may be ſo palpable and conſpicuous to him, as to leave no room for *Doubts* or *Scruples*. But beſides all this, there is a *Voice within*, there is a *Divine Teacher* and *Inſtructor*, which will *ever abide with him*, and *lead him into all neceſſary Truth*: All which is implied in *thoſe* words of our Lord, *If any man will do his will, he ſhall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I ſpeak of my ſelf*, John 7. 17.

2. Extraordinary *Natural parts*, ſuch as Sagacity or Acuteneſs of Judgment, ſtrength of Memory, the liveline ſs of Imagination, are not neceſſary to *Illumination*. The *Goſpel*, as I remember, takes *no notice* of *theſe*. Such is the *beauty* of *Holineſs*,

Holineſs, that it requires rather *purity* of *Heart*, than *quickneſs* of *Apprehenſion*, to render us *enamoured* of it. And the very ſame thing may be ſaid of the *Power* and *Energy* of all *Goſpel Motives*, and of the *Proofs* and *Evidences* too of *Divine Truths*. To *convince* and *affect* us, there is no need of Sagacity and Penetration, but *Probity* and *Sincerity*. However I have *two*, or *three Reflections* to make here, which may not be unuſeful: For though *Acuteneſs* and *Retention*, by which I mean quickneſs in *diſcerning*, and firmneſs in *preſerving* Truth, be commonly accounted *Natural Parts*, and generally are ſo; yet I think, where the *one* or the *other* are moſt *defective*, they may be much *helped* and wonderfully *improved*. To which end I remark, *Firſt*, That thoſe *defects* of *Underſtanding* or *Memory*, which *ſome* are wont to accuſe themſelves of in *Spiritual* things, are with more *Juſtice* to be imputed to *want* of *concern* and *affection* for *ſuch* things, than to any incapacity of *Nature*. 'Tis plain, we eaſily *underſtand*, and eaſily *remember*, what we *deſire* and *love*. And where-ever we follow the Impulſe or Conduct of *ſtrong Inclination*, we ſeldom fail of *excelling*. Let us therefore take care, that our *Hearts* be *ſet* upon the *things* of *God*; and we ſhall ſoon ſee that our *Judg-*

ment and *Memory* will no more fail us *here*, than in those *worldly Interests* and *Pleasures*, which we are most intent upon. *Secondly*, As to *Memory*; it depends very much upon the *Perspicuity*, *Regularity* and *Order* of our Notions. Many complain of want of *Memory*, when the defect is in their *Judgment*. And *others*, while they grasp at *all*, retain *nothing*. In order then to relieve this *infirmity* of *Memory*, it were an excellent way to *confine* our search and *Meditation* to a *few Objects*, and to have these *clearly* and *methodically* handled. A *Catechetical* way of expounding and asserting the *Rudiments* of our Faith, if done as it ought to be, is of great service to Persons of *all Capacities*; but especially to *those* of *meaner*. For *thus* they may not only be enriched with the *Knowledge* of the most *useful* things, and of the *grounds* on which our Obligation either to *Belief* or *Practice* is bottom'd; but also may be furnished with general *Principles* of *Reason*, by which they may steer their *Judgment* in *all* cases; and with certain *Heads* of *Faith* and *Morals*, to which they may be able to reduce most of what they *read* or *hear*. *Thirdly*, 'Tis with the Understanding as with the Eye of the Body: *One* sees *further* off, and in a *fainter* Light; but *another* sees as *well*, with regard to all the *uses* of Life,

who yet requires that the Object ſhould be *nearer*, and the Light *better*. Men of *ſlow* Capacities muſt not be *Daring* or *Precipitate* in paſſing their *Sentence*, and forming their *Notions*. They muſt *examine* whether the Matters they *enquire* after be not too *remote* and *obſcure*: Whether the Object may be brought *nearer*, and placed in a *better Light*; or whether they may be furniſhed with *Teleſcopes* or *Microſcopes* fit for them. If *not*, they muſt quit the ſearch of *ſuch* Truths as *improper* and *unneceſſary* for *them*: By which means they will, at leaſt, avoid being *deceived* or *perplexed*; which is no ſmall *advantage*. To be enriched with a kind of *Univerſal Knowledge* is a *great* thing; but I doubt *too great* for *Man*. *Next* to this is, to be endowed with a Knowledge of *neceſſary* and *important Truths*; and to be *freed* from *Errors* and *Perplexity* in Matters of any *moment*. And methinks it were no great exceſs of *Modeſty* or *Humility*, for *Man* to be *content* with *this*.

3. There is no great need of *acquired Learning* in order to true *Illumination*. Our *Saviour* did not exact of his *Diſciples*, as a neceſſary Preparation for his Doctrine, the *Knowledge* of *Tongues*; the *Hiſtory* of *Times*, or *Nature*; *Logick*, *Metaphyſicks*, *Mathematicks*, or the like. *Theſe* indeed

may be *ſerviceable* to *many* excellent *Ends*: They may be great *accompliſhments* of the Mind; great *Ornaments* and very engaging *Entertainments* of Life: They may be, finally, very excellent and neceſſary *Inſtruments* of, or *Introductions* to, *ſeveral Profeſſions* or *Employments*. But as to *Perfection* and *Happineſs*, to *theſe* they can never be *indiſpenſably* neceſſary. A man may be excellently, habitually *Good*, without more *Languages* than *one*: He may be fully perſuaded of thoſe great *Truths*, that will render him Maſter of his Paſſions, and independent of the World; that will render him eaſy and uſeful in *this* Life, and glorious in *another*, though he be no *Logician* nor *Metaphyſician*. Yet would I not all this while be ſuppoſed to exclude the uſe of true *Reaſon* and ſolid *Judgment*. Though the *meaneſt* Capacity may attain to its proper *Perfection*; that is, ſuch a meaſure of *Knowledge*, as may make the Man truly *wiſe* and *happy*; yet the more *capacious* any Man's *Soul* is, and the more *enlarged* his *Knowledge*, the more *Perfect* and *Happy* He.

4. The *Qualifications* previouſly neceſſary to *Illumination*, are *two* or *three Moral* ones, implied in that *Infant Temper* our *Saviour* required in thoſe who would be his *Diſciples*. Theſe are *Humility*, *Impartiality*, and

and a *thirſt* or *love* of *Truth*. *Firſt*, *Humility*. He that will be *taught of God* muſt not be *Proud* or *Confident* in *himſelf*. He muſt not *over-rate* his own *Parts* and *Capacity*; nor lean too ſtifly to his *own Underſtanding*. He muſt firmly believe, that *Illumination* is the *Work of God*; and on *Him* he muſt depend. He muſt confeſs the *weakneſs* of his own *Faculties*, the natural *Poverty* and *Indigence* of his *Underſtanding*; and ſo look up to *God*, who is the Fountain of *Wiſdom*; and giveth *Grace to the humble, but reſiſteth the proud*. *Secondly*, *Impartiality*, *Sincerity*, or a certain *Purity* and *Innocence of Judgment*, if I may be allowed to ſpeak ſo. That the *Underſtanding* may be *capable* of *Divine Light*, it muſt not be blur'd and ſtain'd by *falſe Principles*: It muſt not be byaſſed nor influenced by any *corrupt Inclinations*. Some to prove their *Impartiality* or *Freedom* of Judgment, abandon themſelves to the ſcrupulouſneſs of *Scepticiſm*, and a wanton itch of endleſs *Diſputation* and *Contradiction*. But I cannot think it neceſſary to our *Freedom* and *Impartiality*, to deny the *Evidence* of our *Senſes*; to oppoſe the *Univerſal Reaſon* of *Mankind*; and to ſhake off all *Reverence* for the *Integrity* of *Man*, and the *Veracity of God*. No, *this* ſavours too much, either of *Oſtentation*, or of a raw and un-

experienced *Affectation* of new Theories and Speculations. *He* ſecures his *Freedom* ſufficiently, who guards his *Reaſon* againſt the force of groundleſs *Prepoſſeſſions*, and ſenſeleſs *Modes* and *Cuſtoms*; againſt the *Luſts* of the *Body*, and the *prejudices* of *Parties*: Who keeps a ſtrict Eye upon the Motions and Tendencies of his *inferior* Nature; who admits not the Dictates of a *Single Perſon* or *Party* for *Catholick Reaſon*; who conſiders, that there are *Revolutions* of *Philoſophy* and *Opinions* as well as *States* and *Kingdoms*; and *judges* well of *Times* and *Men*, e're he pay much Deference to *Authority*. But *Thirdly*, This is not all that is neceſſary to any *compleat* Degree of *Illumination*. *Impartiality* is neceſſary to the firſt *Dawnings* of it; but if we would have it increaſed and diffuſe it ſelf into a *perfect Day* of Spiritual *Wiſdom* and *Underſtanding*, we muſt *hunger and thirſt* after *Truth*. An *unprejudiced* Mind is neceſſary to qualify us for the firſt *Rudiments* of *Truth*; but we muſt be inflamed with *Deſire* and *Love* of it, e're we ſhall enter into the *Sanctuary* or *Receſſes* of it. Therefore our *Saviour* invites to him *every one that thirſts*, John 7. 37. And St. *Peter* exhorts us, *as new born babes to deſire the ſincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby*, 1 Epiſt. 2. 2. And St. *Paul* imputes the

Damna-

Damnation of *thoſe that periſh*, to *want of love of the truth*, 2 Theſſ. 2. 10. 'Tis too *trifling* to *Object* here, how come we to *thirſt* after what we do not *know*? For it concerns *every* man to *enquire* what will *become* of him *for ever*; and if he be already *aſſured* that there is *another World*, and a glorious *Salvation* to be attained, it is *natural* to *thirſt* after the *Reſolution* of ſuch Queſtions as *theſe*, *What* ſhall I *do* to be *ſaved*? *What* ſhall I *do* to inherit an *Eternal Life*? And ſuch is the *Beauty* of *Illuminating Truth*, that every *Glance* of it kindles in our Hearts the Love of it: And ſuch its *boundleſs Perfection*, that the more we *know*, the more ſtill ſhall we *deſire to know*. Having thus conſidered what *qualifies* Man for *Illumination*, my *next* buſineſs is to enquire,

§. 2. *What* one thus qualified is to *do* for the actual *Attainment* of it. All the Advice that I can think fit here to be given, may be reduced to *four* Heads:

1. That we do not ſuffer our Minds to be *engaged* in queſt of Knowledge *foreign* to our purpoſe

2. That we apply our ſelves with a very *tender* and *ſenſible Concern* to the *Study* of *Illuminating Truths*.

3 That we act *conformable* to those *Measures* of *Light* which we have *attain'd*.

4 That we frequently and constantly address our selves to *God* by *Prayer*, for the *Illumination* of his *Grace*.

1. That we do not suffer, &c. *This* is a natural and necessary *Consequence* of what has been already said concerning *Illumination*. For if *Illumination* consist in the *Knowledge*, not of *all* sort of *Truths*, but the most *necessary* and *important*, such as *purify* and *perfect* our Nature; such as procure us *sacred* and *stable Pleasure*, and all the *Rewards* that flow from our *Adoption* to *God*; it is then plain, he who would be *Perfect*, ought not to amuse and distract his Mind in Pursuit of *trifling* or *divertive Knowledge*: That he ought to shun, and not to admit whatever is apt to *entangle*, *perplex*, or *defile* him; and to *fix* his Thoughts, and *confine* his Meditations to the *great Truths* of the *Gospel*. He that *knows the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent*, knows *enough* to oblige him to *Virtue*, and to open the way to *Glory* and *everlasting Life*. He that *knows nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified*, knows *enough* in order to *Peace*, *Grace* and *Joy*; *enough* to promote *Holiness* and *Hope*; *Hope* that abounds in *joy unspeakable and full of glory*.

2. We

2. We muſt apply our ſelves with a very *tender* and ſenſible *Concern* to the Study of *Illuminating Truths*. This *Rule* muſt be underſtood to enjoin *three* things 1. Great *Care* and *Caution* in examining Doctrines propoſed; and in *diſtinguiſhing* between *Truth* and *Falſehood*. 2. Great *Diligence* and *Induſtry* to increaſe and enlarge our *Knowledge*. 3. Frequent and ſerious *Reflection* upon the *Truths* we *know*.

1. There is need of great *Caution*, in the *Trial* and *Examination* of *Doctrines*. This the *Scripture* it ſelf frequently puts us in mind of: And not without reaſon; becauſe the Devil *ſows his tares amongſt the wheat*; *Errors*, and theſe too fatal and deſtructive ones, are frequently obtruded upon the World for the *Revelations* of *God*; and every *Party*, nay, every *ſingle Author* lays the ſtreſs of *Salvation* on their *peculiar* and *diſtinguiſhing* Opinions. *Beloved, believe not every ſpirit, but try the ſpirits whether they are of God: becauſe many falſe prophets are gone out into the world*, 1 John 4. 1. 'Tis needleſs to multiply *Texts* or *Words* on this occaſion. When the Peace and Purity of our Mind, the Rectitude and Happineſs of our Lives, and the Bleſſedneſs of Eternity has ſo cloſe and neceſſary a Dependence upon the *Doctrines* we imbibe,

imbibe, that we hereby either *ſecure* or *forfeit* them; who ſees not, unleſs he be ſtupid and infatuated, that greater *Care* and *Solicitude* is neceſſary *here*, than in *any* matter whatever, becauſe there is *no* other of *equal* moment? Bad *Money*, or bad *Wares* inſtead of good; an ill *Title* or *Conveyance* inſtead of a firm and clear one, may *impoveriſh* us: Bad *Drugs* inſtead of good may *infect* the *Body* and *deſtroy* the *Health*: But *what* is all *this* to the diſmal Conſequences of *Error* and *Hereſy*, which *impoveriſhes* and *infects* the *Mind*, *perverts* the *Life*, and *damns* the *Man* to all *Eternity*? The Example of the *Bereans* is never *forgot*; And indeed never *ought* to be on *this* occaſion. We muſt admit nothing *haſtily*; aſſent to nothing without examining the *Grounds* on which it ſtands. *Credulity*, *Precipitation*, and *Confidence*, are irreconcilable Enemies to *Knowledge* and *Wiſdom*.

2. We are to uſe great *Diligence* and *Induſtry*, to enlarge and encreaſe our *Knowledge*. The Treaſures of *Divine Wiſdom* are almoſt infinite; and it fares with *thoſe* that *Study* them, as with a *Traveller* when he aſcends a *riſing* Ground: Every *new* ſtep almoſt *enlarges* his *Horiſon*, and preſents *new* Countries, *new* Pleaſures to his Eye. 'Tis our own Negligence, if we do not

daily

daily extend the *Compaſs* of our *Knowledge*: If our *View* of things grow not more diſtinct and clear, and our *Belief* of them more firm and ſteddy. *This* is to *grow in grace and in the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus our Lord*, 2 Pet. 3. 18. This is to *have the eye of our underſtanding opened*, Eph. 1. 17. This is to *be filled with the knowledge of God, in all wiſdom and underſtanding*, Col. 1. 9. This is, finally, *for the word of God to dwell in us richly*, Col. 3. 16. And of what *Importance* this is, is manifeſt from what I have before proved: Namely, that *Illumination* conſiſts not in a credulous and ill-grounded, in a ſlight and ſuperficial, or a confuſed and obſcure, or imperfect ſort of *knowledge*; but in a clear, diſtinct, firm, and well eſtabliſhed one. And the acquiring ſuch a one demands a very *diligent* and an *indefatigable Study* of the *Word of Life*. To fill the Mind with numerous, great, and beautiful *Ideas*, and *theſe* clear and diſtinct; to have them engraven in the Memory in deep and laſting *Characters*; to have them lodged and diſpoſed in that *Order*, as to be able in an Inſtant to have recourſe to them; to diſcern and demonſtrate plainly the *Connexion* and *Dependence* of one upon another, and the unqueſtionable *Evidence* of each; this is a Work of *Time* and *Labour*; the Fruit of a Regular and

and Aſſiduous *Search* after *Truth*; and if the Capacities and Fortunes of all Men will not ſuffer them to come up to *this*, they muſt come as near as they can. But if ſuch a *ſearch* as this be *not* neceſſary to *penetrate* the Depths, and to *diſcover* the Beauties of *Divine Truths*, or to *convince* the World and our ſelves of the certainty of them; yet certainly *without* it we ſhall never be able to *extract* their *Force* and *Virtue*, and to *derive Purity* and *Nouriſhment from* them; which is the *next* thing implied in the Rule laid down.

3. We muſt make frequent and ſerious *Reflections* on the *Truths* we *do know*. This again naturally follows from the *Notion* of *Illumination* as it is before ſetled. For if it is not *every knowledge* of the *beſt* things, that ſuffices for *Illumination*, but a *Vital* and *operative* one, that is, a well grounded, clear, diſtinct, and well digeſted one, it is plain, that conſtant, daily, and devout *Meditation* is neceſſary to *Illumination*; becauſe 'tis not a tranſient and perfunctory Reflection upon the moſt *important* Truths; 'tis not a fleeting, rambling, irregular, and deſultory Meditation of them, that will poſſeſs us with *ſuch* a kind of *Knowledge*. To imprint a *Truth* in *lively* Notions upon our Minds, to digeſt it into *Nouriſhment* and *Strength*; and make

make it *mix* it ſelf with all our *Affections*, and all our *Actions*, it is neceſſary that we *dwell* upon it with Conſtancy and Delight. And accordingly we find that excellent and elevated Souls, both under the *Old Teſtament* and the *New*, have been daily, nay, almoſt hourly converſant in the *Book of God:* They have been paſſionately *devoted* to the *Study* of it, and *delighted* more in *it*, than in *Treaſures* or *Honours*; than in the moſt profitable *Employments*, or engaging *Diverſions* of Life. 'Tis *this* kind of *Meditation* on *God*, on *Jeſus*, the *World*, and our *ſelves*, that can alone acquaint us thoroughly with *each:* 'Tis *this* kind of *Meditation* on *Death* and *Judgment*, *Heaven* and *Hell*, that can *make us wiſe unto Salvation.*

The *ſum* of all that I have ſaid on this *Rule* amounts to *this.* That *Illumination* is not to be attained without *Labour* and *Travel.* It is indeed the *Gift of God:* But ſuch a one as he will *never* beſtow but upon thoſe who *ask*, and *ſeek*, and *knock. Divine Bounty*, and *Human Induſtry* do here very well *accord:* The *Spirit of God* generally *joyns* them together; and 'tis *Boldneſs* and *Impiety* in *Man* to go about to *divide* them, *Prov.* 2. 4, 5, 6. *If thou ſeekeſt her as ſilver, and ſearcheſt for her as hid treaſures; then ſhalt thou underſtand*

ſtand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wiſdom; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and underſtanding. Nor will any one ſurely think it much to devote his *Time* and *Labour* to the *Attainment* of *Illumination.* For what is there that can more juſtly *challenge*, or better *deſerve both?* Can *Pleaſure?* There is none but what flows from *Wiſdom*, that is either *pure, great*, or *laſting.* Can *Buſineſs?* What Buſineſs can be of *greater* Importance, than what ſecures our *Salvation*, our *Eternity? Wiſdom then is the principal thing, therefore get wiſdom: and with all thy getting, get underſtanding*, Prov. 4. 7. for without *this*, the moſt deſirable *Poſſeſſions* and *Pleaſures* of Life are but *Cheats* and *Illuſions*; *Miſchiefs* and *Snares. For the turning away of the ſimple ſhall ſlay them; and the proſperity of fools ſhall deſtroy them*, Prov. 1. 32.

3. That we act *conformable* to thoſe *Meaſures* of *Light* which we have *attained.* The more *Spiritual* we grow, the *fitter* we are for the Reſidence of *God's Spirit*, and the more *capable* of his *Influences.* The more we ſubdue all *inordinate Affections*, the *clearer* does the *Underſtanding* grow, and the more *abſolute* its *Authority.* The *Grace* of *God*, if it be complied with and obeyed, while

while it renders us more *like* God, renders us more *dear* to him too: And *one Favour*, if it be not our own fault, qualifies us for *another*. Whoever ſhall obſerve the *Scriptures*, will find that *Holineſs* and *Illumination* advance with *equal* ſteps, and grow up by the *ſame* degrees of Maturity; That as we paſs on from the *Infancy*, to the *Manhood* of *Virtue*, ſo do we from the firſt *Rudiments* of *Wiſdom*, to the *Heights* and *Myſteries* of it. But on the other hand, *Luſt* obſcures and eclipſes the *Light* within: *Sin* depraves and corrupts our *Principles*: And while we renounce our *Virtue*, we *quench* or *chaſe away* the *Spirit*. *Into a malicious Soul wiſdom ſhall not enter; nor dwell in the body that is ſubject unto Sin: For the holy ſpirit of diſcipline will flee deceit, and remove from thoughts that are without underſtanding; and will not abide when unrighteouſneſs cometh in*, Wiſd. 1. 4, 5.

4. We muſt frequently and conſtantly addreſs our ſelves to *God* by *Prayer*, for the *Illumination* of his *Grace*. There is *nothing* that we do not receive from *above*: And if the moſt *inconſiderable* things be the *Gift of God*, from *what* Fountain but from *him*, can we expect *Illumination*? The Raptures of *Poets*, the Wiſdom of *Lawgivers*, the nobleſt Pieces of *Philoſophy*,

phy, and indeed all *Heroick* and *Extraordinary* Performances, were by the *Pagans* themſelves generally attributed to a *Divine Inſpiration*. And the *Old Teſtament* aſcribes a tranſcendent skill even in *Arts* and *Trades* to the *Spirit of God*. It is not therefore to be wondered at, if *Illumination* be attributed to *Him* in the *New*. *Wiſdom* and *Underſtanding* are eſſential *Parts* of *Sanctity*; and therefore muſt proceed from the *ſanctifying Spirit*. We muſt therefore conſtantly look up to *God*, and depend upon *Him* for *Illumination*; we muſt earneſtly *Pray* in the Words of St. *Paul*, *That the God of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the father of glory, would give unto us the ſpirit of wiſdom and revelation*, Eph. i. 17. This Dependence upon *God*, in Expectation of his *Bleſſing* on our *ſearch* after *Knowledge*, puts the Mind into the beſt *Diſpoſition* and *Frame* to attain it: Becauſe it naturally frees and diſingages it from thoſe *Paſſions*, *Prejudices* and *Diſtractions*, which otherwiſe entangle and diſturb it, and render it uncapable of raiſed, ſedate, and coherent Thoughts. But what is *more* than this, there are repeated and expreſs *Promiſes* made it; ſo that it can never fail of Succeſs: *Ask, and it ſhall be given you; ſeek and ye ſhall find, knock, and it ſhall be opened to you.* The reaſon of which is added;

If

If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more ſhall your father which is in heaven give good things (or as it is *Luk.* 11. *the Holy Spirit*) *to them that ask him?* Matt. 7. 7, 11. *If any of you lack wiſdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it ſhall be given him,* Jam. 1. 5. nor do I doubt but *every* good Man has theſe *Promiſes* verified to him. There are *ſudden* Suggeſtions, *unexpected* Manifeſtations, *extraordinary* Elevations of Mind, which are never to be accounted for, but by a *Divine Principle.* Nor does this Doctrine of *Spiritual Illumination* or *Irradiation* in the leaſt diminiſh the Power and Excellence of the *Goſpel of Chriſt*, no more than the *Inſtruction* of the *Goſpel* does ſuperſede that of the *Spirit.* For we muſt not think that the *Spirit* does now reveal any *new* Truth of *general* Uſe or Importance; ſince the *Canon* of *Scripture* would on this ſuppoſal be but a defective *Rule* of *Faith* and *Manners.* But *firſt*, The *Spirit* may *aſſiſt* us in making a fuller *Diſcovery* of the *Senſe* of *Scripture. Secondly*, The *Spirit* may help us to form *clearer* and *diſtincter Notions* of thoſe things we have yet but an *imperfect* and *general* Knowledge of; and to fix and imprint them in more *laſting*, as well as more *legi-*

ble Characters in our Minds: Or it may recal to our *Remembrance* such things as are obliterated and forgotten: Or finally, it may produce in us a more earneſt and ſteddy Application to the Truth of God. *Thirdly*, I ſee no reaſon why the *Spirit* may not vouchſafe us particular *Impulſes*, *Directions* and *Intimations* upon *extraordinary* Occaſions, and *ſudden* Emergencies; where *Holy Writ* affords us no *Light*, and *Human Prudence* is at a *Loſs*. Nor does any thing that I attribute to the *Spirit* in all this, detract or derogate from the Dignity or the Efficacy of the *Scripture*. This then I conceive is *what* the *Spirit* does in the Work of *Illumination*. But *how* it does, it is not *neceſſary*, nor, I doubt *poſſible* to be determined. Nor ought our *Ignorance* of *this* to be objected againſt the *Truth* of *Divine Illumination*. We are ſure we *underſtand* and *remember*, and exerciſe a *Freedom* or *Liberty* of Will, in our Choices, Reſolutions, and Actions: But the *Manner* how we do this, is an Enquiry that does hitherto, for ought I can ſee, wholly ſurpaſs and tranſcend our *Philoſophy*.

I will here cloſe this *Chapter* with a *Prayer* of *Fulgentius*, *Lib.* 1. *cap.* 4. After he has in the beginning of the *Chapter*

ter diſclaimed all *Pretences* to the ſetting up himſelf a *Maſter*, *Doctor* or *Diſtator* to his *Brethren*, he breaks out into theſe devout and pious Words.——'I will not 'ceaſe to *Pray*, that our true *Maſter* and '*Doctor Chriſt Jeſus*, either by the *Ora*'*cles* of his *Goſpel*, or by the *Converſati*'*on* of my *Brethren* or *Joynt-diſciples*; or 'elſe by the ſecret and delightful Inſtru'ction of *Divine Inſpiration*, in which with'out the Elements of Letters, or the ſound 'of Speech, *Truth* ſpeaks with ſo much 'the *ſweeter*, as the *ſtiller* and *ſofter* Voice; 'would vouchſafe to *teach* me thoſe things, 'which I may *ſo* propoſe, and *ſo* aſſert, 'that in all my Expoſitions and Aſſerti'ons, I may be ever found conformable, 'and obedient, and firm to *that Truth*, 'which can neither *Deceive*, nor be *De*'*ceived*. For it is *Truth* it ſelf that en'lightens, confirms, and aids me, that I 'may always obey and aſſent to the *Truth*. 'By *Truth* I deſire to be informed of 'thoſe many *more* things which I am *Ig*'*norant* of, from *whom* I have received the '*few* I know. Of *Truth* I beg, through 'preventing and aſſiſting Grace, to be in'ſtructed in whatever I *yet* know not, which 'conduces to the Intereſt of my Virtue 'and Happineſs; to be preſerved and kept 'ſtedfaſt in *thoſe* Truths which I *know*;

'to be reformed and rectified in those 'Points, in which, as is common to Man, 'I am *mistaken*: to be confirmed and esta-'blished in those Truths wherein I *waver*; 'and to be delivered from those Opinions 'that are *erroneous* or *hurtful*. I beg, lastly, 'that *Truth* may ever find, both in my 'Thoughts and Speeches, all that sound 'and wholesome Doctrine I have recei-'ved from *its* Gift; and that *it* would 'always cause me to utter those things, 'which are agreeable to *it self* in the *first* 'place; and consequently acceptable to *all* 'faithful *Christians* in the *next*.

CHAP. III.

Of Liberty.

AFTER *Illumination*, which is the *Perfection* of the *Understanding*, follows *Liberty*, which is the *Perfection* of the *Will*. In Treating of which, I shall *First* give an account of *Liberty* in *General*: And *then* discourse of the several *Parts* of it; as it regards *Wickedness*, *Unfruitfness*, *Human Infirmities*, and *Original Corruption*.

§. 1. What *Liberty* is. There have been

several

ſeveral *Miſtakes* about this Matter: But theſe have been ſo abſurd or extravagant; ſo deſigning or ſenſual, that they *Need* not, I think, a ſerious *Refutation*. However 'tis neceſſary in a word or two to remove this *Rubbiſh* and *Lumber* out of my way, that I may build up and eſtabliſh the *Truth* more eaſily and regularly. *Some* then have placed Chriſtian *Liberty* in Deliverance from the *Moſaick Yoke*. But this is to make our *Liberty* conſiſt in Freedom from a *Yoke* to which we were *never* ſubject; and to make our Glorious Redemption from the Tyranny of *Sin* and the *Miſery* that attends it, dwindle into an Immunity from *external* Rites and Obſervances. 'Tis true, the *Moſaick* Inſtitution, as far as it conſiſted in *outward* Obſervances and *Typical* Rites, is now diſſolved; the *Meſſias* being come, who was the *Subſtance* of thoſe *Shadows*; and the *Beauty of Holineſs* being unfolded and diſplayed, without any *Vail* upon her Face. But what is this to *Eccleſiaſtical Authority*? Or to thoſe *Eccleſiaſtical Inſtitutions*, which are no Part of the *Moſaick* Yoke? From the Abrogation indeed, or Abolition of *Ritual* and *Typical* Religion one may infer, *Firſt*, That *Chriſtianity* muſt be a *Rational* Worſhip, a *Moral Spiritual* Service. And therefore, *Secondly*, That *Human* Inſtitutions, when they enjoyn any thing as a *neceſſary*

and *essential* Part of Religion, which *God* has not made so; or when they impose such *Rites* as through the Number or Nature of them, cherish *Superstition*, *obscure* the *Gospel*, *weaken* its Force, or prove *burthensom* to us, are to be rejected and not complied with. Thus much is plain, and nothing farther. There have been *Others*, who have run into more intolerable *Errors*. For *some* have placed *Christian Liberty* in Exemption from the Laws of *Men*: And *Others*, advancing higher, in Exemption even from the *moral* and *immutable* Laws of *God*. But the *Folly* and *Wickedness* of these Opinions sufficiently *confute* them: Since 'tis notorious to every one, that *Disobedience* and *Anarchy* is as flat a Contradiction to the *Peaceableness*, as *Voluptuousness* and *Luxury* is to the *Purity* of that *Wisdom which is from above*. But how absurd and wicked soever these *Notions* are, yet do we find them greedily embraced and industriously propagated at *this* day; and behold, with Amazement, the baffled and despicable *Gnosticks*, *Priscillianists*, *Libertines*, and I know not what *other* Spawn of *Hell*, reviving in *Deists* and *Atheists*. *These* indeed do not advance their Errors under a Pretence of *Christian Liberty*, but, which is more ingenuous, and less scandalous of the two, in open *Defiance*

and

and confeſſed *Oppoſition* to *Chriſtianity*. They tell us, that we impoſe upon the World *falſe* and *fantaſtick* Notions of *Virtue* and *Liberty*: That *Religion* does *enſlave* Man, not ſet him *free*; awing the Mind by groundleſs and ſuperſtitious Principles, and reſtraining and infringing our true and natural *Liberty*: Which, if we will believe *them*, conſiſts in giving *Nature* its full ſwing; letting looſe the Reins to the moſt head-ſtrong *Luſts*, and the wildeſt and the moſt corrupt *Imaginations*. But to this; 'tis eaſy to anſwer, That while theſe Men attempt to eſtabliſh their Errors, and fortify their Minds in them, by *Arguments* of ſome ſort or other, as they do; 'tis plain, that *they* ſuppoſe and acknowledge with *us*, That we ought to be ruled and governed by *Reaſon*: And if *this* be true, then, by undeniable Conſequence, true *Liberty* muſt conſiſt, not in doing what we *liſt*, but what we *ought*; not in following our *Luſt* or *Fancy*, but our *Reaſon*; not in being *exempt* from *Law*, but in *being a Law to our ſelves*. And then I appeal to all the World, whether the Diſcipline of *Virtue*, or *Libertiniſm*; whether the Schools of *Epicurus*, or *Chriſt*, be the way to true *Liberty*. I appeal to the *Experience* of Mankind, whether *Spiritual* or *Senſual* Pleaſure; whether the

Love of *God* and *Virtue*, or the *Love* of the *World* and *Body*, be the more like to qualify and dispose us to obey the Dictates of sober and solid *Reason*. But the Truth is, here is no need of *Arguments*: The *Lives* and *Fortunes* of *Atheists* and *Deists* proclaim aloud what a glorious kind of *Liberty* they are like to bless the World with, 2 *Pet.* 2. 19. *Whilst they promise liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption.* And this *Corruption* draws on their *Ruin*. The dishonourable and miserable *Courses*, in which these poor Wretches are plunged, and in which, generally, they perish before their time, are such an open *Contradiction* to *Reason*, that no man doubts but that they have abandoned *its* Conduct, that they have given themselves up to that of *Lust* and *Humor*; and that they earnestly endeavour to force or betray their *Reason* into a *Compliance* to *Screen* themselves from the reproach and disturbance of their own *Minds*, and from the shame and contempt of the *World*. I have dwelt long enough on *this* Argument. 'Tis *now* time to pass *on*, and resolve what *Christian Liberty* really *is*.

This is in a manner evident from what has been suggested already. For if *Reason* be the governing Faculty in *Man*, then the *Liberty of Man* must consist in his *Subjection* to

to *Reason*: And so *Christian Liberty* will be nothing else but *Subjection* to *Reason* enlighten'd by *Revelation*. *Two* things therefore are *Essential* to true *Liberty*: A clear and unbyassed *Judgement*; and a Power and Capacity of Acting *conformable* to it. This is a very *short*, but *full* Account of *Liberty*. *Darkness* and *Impotence* constitute our *Slavery*: *Light* and *Strength* our *Freedom*. Man is then *free*, when his *Reason* is not awed by vile *Fears*, or bribed by viler *Hopes*: When it is not tumultuously transported and hurried away by *Lusts* and *Passions*; nor cheated and deluded by the gilded appearances of *Sophisticated* Good; but it deliberates *impartially*, and commands *effectually*. And because the great *Obstacle* of this *Liberty* is *Sin*; because natural and contracted *Corruption* are the *Fetters* in which we are bound; because the *law in the body wars against the law in the mind*, obscuring the *Light*, and enfeebling the *Authority* of *Reason*; hence it is, that *Christian Liberty* is as truly as commonly described by a *Dominion* over the *Body*, by the subduing our corrupt *Affections*, and by *Deliverance* from *Sin*. This Notion of *Liberty* may be sufficiently established upon that Account of *Servitude* or *Bondage* which the *Apostle* gives us, *Rom.* 7. where he represents it as consisting in *Impotence*

potence or *Inability* to do those things, which *God* commands, and *Reason* approves: *For to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not*, ver. 18. *Liberty* therefore must on the *contrary* consist in being *able*, not only to *will*, but to *do* good; in *obeying* those *Commandments*, which we cannot but acknowledge to be *holy*, and *just*, and *good*. And this is the very Notion which our *Lord* and *Master* gives us of it, *Joh.* 8. For, when the *Jews* bragg'd of their *Freedom*, he lets them know, that *Freedom* could not consist with *Subjection* to *Sin*: *He that committeth sin is the servant of sin*, ver. 34. That honourable *Parentage*, and the *Freedom* of the *Body*, was but a false and ludicrous *Appearance* of *Liberty*: That if they would be *free indeed*, *the Son must make them so*, ver. 36. *i. e.* they must, by his *Spirit* and *Doctrine* be rescued from the *Servitude* of *Lust* and *Error*, and be set at *Liberty* to work *Righteousness*. *If ye continue in my word, then are ye my Disciples indeed; and ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free*, ver. 31, 32. Finally, Not to multiply *Proofs* of a truth that is scarce liable to be *controverted*, as the *Apostle* describes the *Bondage* of a *Sinner* in *Rom.* 7. so does he the *Liberty* of a *Saint* in *Rom.* 8. For there, *ver.* 2. he tells us,

That

That *the law of the spirit of life* has set the true Christian *free from the law of Sin and Death.* And then he lets us know *wherein* this *Liberty* consists; *in walking, not after the flesh, but after the spirit*; in the *Mortification* of *the Body of Sin*, and *Restitution* of the *Mind* to its just *Empire* and *Authority*. *If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness*, ver. 10. And all this is the same thing with his *Description* of *Liberty*, *Chapter 6.* where, 'tis nothing else, but for a Man to be made *free from sin, and become the servant of God.* Thus then we have a plain account of *Bondage* and *Liberty*. Yet for the clearer understanding of *both*, it will not be amiss to observe, that they are *each* capable of different *Degrees*; and both the *one* and the *other* may be *more* or *less* entire, compleat and absolute, according to the different *Progress* of Men in *Vice* and *Virtue*. Thus, in *some* Men, not their *Will* only, but their very *Reason* is enslaved. Their *Understanding* is so far infatuated, their Affections so *intirely* captivated, that there is no *Conflict* at all between the *Mind* and the *Body*: They commit *Sin* without any *Reluctancy* beforehand, or any *Remorse* afterwards: Their *seared Conscience* making no *Remonstrance*, inflicting no *Wounds*, nor

nor denouncing any *Threats*. This is the *last* Degree of *Vassalage*. *Such* are said in *Scripture* to be *dead in trespasses and sins*. *Others* there are, in whom their Lust and Appetite *prevails* indeed, but not without *Opposition*. They *Reason* rightly; and, which is the natural Result of this, have some *Desires* and *wishes* of *Righteousness*: But through the Prevalency of the *Body*, they are unable to act and live *conformable* to their *Reason*. Their *Understanding* has indeed *Light*, but not *Authority*: It *consents* to the *Law* of *God*, but it has no Power, no Force to make it be *obeyed*: It produces indeed some good *Inclinations*, *Purposes*, and *Efforts*; but they prove *weak* and *ineffectual* ones, and *unable* to grapple with the stronger *Passion* raised by the *Body*. And as *Bondage*, so *Liberty* is of different *Degrees*, and different *Strength*. For though *Liberty* may be able to *subsist*, where there is much *Opposition* from the *Body*, yet 'tis plain *that Liberty* is most *absolute* and *compleat*, where the *Opposition* is *least*, where the *Body* is reduced to an intire *Submission* and *Obsequiousness*, and the *Spirit* reigns with an uncontroul'd and unlimited *Authority*. And this *latter* is *that Liberty* which I would have my *Perfect* Man possessed of. I know very well 'tis *commonly* taught by *some*, that there is *no* such State:

State: But I think this *Doctrine*, if it be throughly conſidered, has neither *Scripture*, *Reaſon*, nor *Experience* to ſupport it. For as to thoſe *Places*, *Rom.* 7. and *Gal.* 5. urged in favour of an almoſt inceſſant, ſtrong, and too frequently prevalent *luſting of the fleſh againſt the ſpirit*, it has been often anſwered, and proved too, that they are ſo far from belonging to the *Perfect*, that they belong not to the *Regenerate*. But on the contrary, thoſe *Texts* that repreſent the *Yoke of Chriſt eaſy, and his burden light*; which affirm the *Commandments of Chriſt not to be grievous to ſuch as are made perfect in love*; do all bear witneſs to *that Liberty* which I *contend* for. *Nor* does *Reaſon* favour my Opinion leſs than *Scripture*. For if the *Perfect* man be a *New Creature*, if he be *transformed* into a *New Nature*; if his *Body* be *dead to ſin, and his ſpirit live to righteouſneſs*; in one word, if the *world be as much crucified to him, as he to it*; I cannot ſee why it ſhould not be *eaſy* for him to act *conſonant* to his *Nature*; why he ſhould not with Pleaſure and Readineſs *follow* that *Spirit*, and *obey* thoſe *Affections*, which *reign* and *rule* in him. Nor can I ſee why a *Habit of Righteouſneſs* ſhould not have the ſame *Properties* with *other Habits*; that is, be attended with *eaſe* and *pleaſure* in its Operations and Actions.

Actions. 'Tis true, I can eaſily ſee why the *Habits of Righteouſneſs* are *acquired* with more *Difficulty* than thoſe of any *other* kind: But, I ſay, I cannot ſee, when they *are* acquired, why they ſhould not be as *natural* and *delightful* to us as any *other*. *Laſtly*, how *degenerate* ſoever Ages *paſt* have been, or the *preſent* is, I dare not ſo far diſtruſt the Goodneſs of my Cauſe, or the Virtue of *Mankind*, as not to refer my ſelf willingly, in this Point, to the Deciſion of *Experience*. I am very well aſſured, that Truth and Juſtice, Devotion and Charity, Honour and Integrity, are to a great many ſo dear and delightful, ſo natural, ſo eaſy, that it is hard to determine, whether they are more ſtrongly moved by a ſenſe of *Duty*, or the Inſtigations of *Love* and *Inclination*; and that they cannot do a *baſe* thing without the utmoſt *Mortification* and *Violence* to their *Nature*. Nor is all this to be wondred at, if we again reflect on what I juſt now intimated; that the *Perfect* Man is a *new creature*, *transformed daily from glory to glory*: That he is moved by *new Affections*, raiſed and fortified by *new Principles*: That he is animated by a *Divine Energy*, and *ſees* all things by a *truer* and *brighter Light*; through *which* the *things of God* appear *lovely* and *beautiful*, the things of the *World deformed* and *worthleſs*;

worthleſs; juſt as to him who views them through a *Microſcope*, the *Works of God* appear *exact* and *elegant*; but *thoſe of Man*, *courſe*, and *bungling*, and *ugly*. My *Opinion* then, which aſſerts the *abſolute Liberty* of the *Perfect* Man, is ſufficiently *proved here*, and in *Chapter the firſt*. And *if* I thought it were *not*, I could eaſily *reinforce* it with freſh *Recruits*. For the glorious *Characters* that are given us in *Scripture*, of the *Liberty* of the *Children of God*, and the bleſſed *Fruit* of it, *Peace* and *Joy in the Holy Ghoſt*, would eaſily furniſh me with invincible *Arguments*: Nor would the *contrary* Opinion ever have been *able* to have kept the *Field* ſo *long* as it has done, had it not been favoured by a *weak* and *decayed Piety*; by the *Fondneſſes* of Men for *themſelves*, in ſpight of their *Sins* and *Frailties*; and by many *miſtaken Texts*.

But that this Matter may, if poſſible, be freed from *all Objections*. 1. I here *diſtinguiſh* between *Inordinate* and *Natural Affections*. By *Inordinate Affections*, I mean the Tendencies of the Soul towards that which is *Unlawful*: By *Natural*, its Propenſion to the *Body* with which it is inveſted; the Deſire of its *Health* and *Eaſe*, and the *Conveniencies* and *Neceſſaries of Life* for this end. Now when *Religion* enjoyns

enjoyns Repugnances to the *former* Appetites, the *Obedience* of the *Perfect* Man has *no Reluctancy* in it: But when it enjoyns things, as sometimes occasionally it does, which thwart and cross the *latter*; here the *Obedience* even of *Christ* himself could not be exempt from *Conflict*; for our *Natural Appetites*, in *this* sense of them, will *never* be put off till our *Bodies* be. I think this is so *clear*, it needs not be illustrated by *Instances*: Or else 'twere easy to shew, that though good men have practised *Temperance*, *Chastity*, *Charity*, and other Virtues of this kind with *ease* and *pleasure* too; yet has Nature *shrunk* and *startled* at *Persecution* and *Martyrdom*: Though even *here* too the Courage and Resolution of *some* hath appear'd to be much *above* what *Human Nature* ever seem'd *capable* of. 2. I do not in the least suppose that *Nature* is so *changed*, but that the *Inclinations* to sinful Pleasure, or Profit, or any other forbidden Object, will soon *revive* again, even in the *Perfect* Man, unless he keep a *watch* and *guard* upon himself, and *pass the time of his sojourning here in fear*. Not to be subject to *disorderly Desires*, not to be liable to *irregular Motions*, is the Privilege of *Souls* when stript of a *Mortal* Body, or cloath'd with an *Immortal* one. Till *then*, the Conjunction

ction of *Flesh* and *Blood* will ever render the poor *Soul* obnoxious to *carnal* and *worldly* Appetites: And the *natural* Appetites of the Body do so easily pass those Bounds that divide them from *sinful* ones, that the *best* of men can never be *secure*, but when the Mind is taken up in *Contemplation*, *Devotion*, *Good Works*, or engaged in the *Prosecution* of some just and honest *Design*, or amused by some innocent *Recreation*: For in *these* Cases the *Body* is either made the *Instrument of Righteousness*; or at least-wise, 'tis innocently *busied* and *diverted* from those *Objects*, to which it has too too impetuous a *Tendency*. I have now, I think, sufficiently *stated* the *Notion* of *true Liberty*; and I hope sufficiently *guarded* it. And have nothing to do but to *proceed* to the *Fruits* of it; which will serve for so many *Motives* or *Inducements* to its *Attainment*.

§. 2. Of the *Fruits* of *Liberty*.

These may be reduced under four *Heads*.

1. *Sin* being a great *Evil*, *Deliverance* from it is great *Happiness*.

2. A second Fruit of this *Liberty* is *Good Works*.

3. It gives us a near *Relation* to *God*.

4. The great and laſt *Fruit* of it is *Eternal Life.*

Theſe are *all* compriſed by the *Apoſtle* in *Rom.* 6. 21, 22, 23. *What fruit had ye then in thoſe things, whereof ye are now aſhamed? For the end of thoſe things is death. But now being made free from ſin, and become ſervants to God, ye have your fruit unto holineſs, and the end everlaſting life. For the wages of ſin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.* And theſe are the great *Ends* which the *Goſpel*, that *perfect law of liberty*, aims at, and for which it was *Preached* to the World; as appears from thoſe *words* of our *Lord* to St. *Paul*, Acts 26. 17, 18. *Unto whom now I ſend thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveneſs of ſins, and inheritance among them which are ſanctified by faith that is in me.* I will *here* inſiſt on theſe Bleſſed *Effects* of *Chriſtian Liberty*; not only becauſe the *Deſign* of the *Chapter* demands it, but alſo to prevent the being obliged to any tedious *Repetition* of them hereafter, under every diſtinct *Branch* of *Chriſtian Liberty.*

§. 1. *Sin* is a great *Evil*; and therefore *Deliverance* from the *Dominion* of it is

is a great *Good*. To make this evident, we need but reflect a little on the *Nature* and *Effects* of *Sin*. If we enquire into the *Nature* of *Sin*, we ſhall find that it is *founded* in the *Subverſion* of the Dignity, and *defacing* the Beauty of *Human Nature*: And that it *conſiſts* in the *Darkneſs* of our Underſtanding, the *Depravity* of our Affections, and the *Feebleneſs* and *Impotence* of the Will. The *Underſtanding* of a *Sinner* is incapable of *diſcerning* the Certainty and Force of Divine Truths, the Lovelineſs of Virtue, the unſpeakable Pleaſure which now flows from the great and precious *Promiſes* of the Goſpel, and the incomparably greater which will one day flow from the Accompliſhment and Fruition of them. His *Affections*, which if fixt and bent on *Virtue*, had been *Incentives*, as they were deſigned by God, to *noble* and *worthy* Actions, being *biaſs'd* and *perverted*, do now hurry him on to *lewd* and *wicked* ones. And by *theſe* the *Mind*, if at any time it chance to be awakened and render'd ſenſible of its Happineſs and Duty, is *over-power'd* and *oppreſs'd*. If *this* were not the true *State* of a *Sinner*; if the *ſtrength* of *Sin* did not thus conſiſt in the *Diſorder* and *Impotence* of all the *Faculties* of the *Soul*, whence is it that the *Sinner* acts as he *does*? Is it not evident

that his *Understanding* is *infatuated*, when he lives as if he were meerly, wholly, *Body*? As if he had *no Soul*, or none but one *resulting from*, and *dissolv'd with*, its *Temperament* and *Contexture*? One designed to no higher purpose, than to contrive, minister to, and partake in its *Sensualities*? Is it not evident, that *He* has little expectation of *another World*, who *lays up his Treasures* only in *this*; and lives as if he were Born only *to make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof*? 'Tis true, *all Sinners* are not *equally* stupid or obdurate; But even in those in whom some *sparks* of *Understanding* and *Conscience* remain *unextinguished*, how are the *weak* Desires of *Vertue* baffled and over-power'd by the much *stronger* Passions which they have for the *Body* and the *World*? Do they not find themselves reduced to that wretched *state of Bondage*, wherein *the good that they would do, that they do not; but the evil that they would not do, that is present with them*? 'Tis plain then that *Sin* is a *Disease* in our Nature: That it not only *extinguishes* the *Grace* of the *Spirit*, and *obliterates* the *Image of God* stampt on the Soul in its Creation; but also scatters and diffuses I know not what *Venom* and *Infection* thorough it, that makes it eagerly *pursue* its *own Misery*. 'Tis a *Disease* that produces

more

more *insupportable* Effects in the *Soul*, than *any* whatever can in the *Body*. The Predominancy of any noxious *Humour* can breed no *Pain*, no *Disturbance*, equal to that of a Predominant *Passion*: No *Scars* or *Ruins* which the worst *Disease* leaves behind it, are half so *deformed* and *loathsom* as those of *Vice*: Nay, that last *Change*, which *Death* it self produces, when it converts a *beautiful* Body into *Dust* and *Rottenness*, is not half so *contemptible* or *hateful* as that of *Sin*, when it transforms *Man* into a *Beast* or *Devil*. If we do not yet sufficiently comprehend the *Nature* of *Sin*, by viewing it as it exists in our *Minds* and *Hearts*, we may Contemplate it in our *Actions*. And *here*, 'tis Blindness and Folly, Rashness and Madness, Incogitance, Levity, Falshood and Cowardise; 'tis *every thing* that is *mean* and *base*: And all this *aggravated* by the most accursed *Ingratitude* that Human Nature is capable of. These and the like *Reflections* on the *Nature* of *Sin*, cannot chuse but render it *hateful*. And if

Secondly, we make any serious ones on the *Effects* of it, they cannot fail of rendering it *frightful* and *dreadful* to *us*. These *Effects* may be especially reduced to *three*; 1. The ill influence *Sin* has upon

our *Temporal* Concerns. 2. *Guilt.* And 3. *Fear.* As to the *First* of these, I shall only say, that we suffer very few *Evils* but what are owing to our own *Sins*: That it is very rarely any *Calamity* befals us, but we may put our Finger on the *Fountain*, the *Sin*, I mean, from whence the Mischief flows. *Whence come wars and fightings among you*, saith St. *James*, *come they not from your lusts, which war in your members?* This is every jot as applicable to *Private* as *Publick* Contentions: And *where envy, strife, and contention is*, no *evil work*, no *disaster* will be long *absent*. I might run through all the different *kinds* of *Evils* that infest the *Body*, or embroil the *Fortune*; that blast our *Hopes*, or stain our *Desires*: And easily shew, that they all generally spring from our *Vices*. Nay, what is worse yet, I could shew that *Sin* converts our *good things* into *evil*, and our *Enjoyments* into *Punishments*: That it renders the *slightest* Evils *intolerable*; turns *Scratches* into *Wounds*, and *Wounds* into *Gangreens*. But this is too *copious* a subject; and would insensibly render me *Voluminous*, when I would be as *short* as possibly I can. A *Second Effect* of *Sin* is *Guilt*; which is nothing else, but a *Consciousness* of having *done ill*, and an *Obligation* to *Punishment* resulting from it. And though

though Men often *Sin* with *Hopes* of *Impunity*, yet it is hard to imagine, even on *this* ſuppoſal, that they ſhould *ſin* without ſuffering the *Reproaches* of their *own Minds*; which ſurely muſt be very *uneaſy* to them: To be perpetually *vext* at ones *own Folly*; to *commit* thoſe things which we inwardly *condemn*, and be in continual *Pain* leſt they ſhould *come to Light*; to be always *diſpleaſed* at *ones ſelf*, and *afraid*, not only of the *Reflections* of *others*, but our *own*: *This* is, methinks, a *great* Evil, did no *other* attend our *ſin*. But, *Thirdly*, *Fear* is almoſt inſeparably joined with *Guilt*: For *Guilt* does not only damp the *Chearfulneſs*, and enfeeble the *Vigour* of the *Mind*; it does not only deſtroy that *Confidence* Man would otherwiſe *naturally* have in *God*, and render him *Cowardly* and *Puſillanimous*; but it *terrifies* his Soul with *Melancholy* Apprehenſions, and makes him live continually in *fear* of *Death* and *Puniſhment*. And thus the *Scripture* repreſents the *ſtate* of a *ſinner*: *The wicked flee when none purſue: but the righteous are bold as a lion*, Prov. 28. 1. *If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things*, 1 John 3. 2. *There is no peace to the wicked, ſaith the Lord*, Iſa. 48. 22. *To deliver them, who through fear of death, were all their life time ſub-*

ject to bondage, Heb. 2. 15. *The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness has surprised the Hipocrites; who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among st us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?* Isa. 33. 14. Nor let any one wonder, that notwithstanding the *outward Gaiety* of the *sinner*, the *Spirit* thus *describes* the *inward Condition* of his *Soul*. As long as Men retain the *Belief* of a *God*, it is impossible they should wholly free themselves from the *Fear* of him. They may indeed *forget* him in the *Fits* of *Lust* or *Passion*: But in their *Intermissions* his *Terrors* will *return* upon them with *more Violence*. *Again*, As long as Men retain the common Principles of *Truth* and *Justice*; if they acknowledge but the Obligation of that *universal Law*, *Thou shalt do to others, as thou wouldest they should do unto thee*, 'tis impossible they should *reflect* on their *sins* without *Regret* and *uneasiness*; for there is no *sin* but has, more or less, *Repugnancy* in it to *Truth*, *Justice*, and *Goodness*. *Finally*, As long as men are persuaded that there is such a Faculty as *Conscience*, that *God* has prescribed them a *Law*, and that they are *accountable* to *Him*; the *natural Conscience* cannot chuse but by *Fits*, and upon *Occasions*, scourge and torture, lance and gash them. And 'tis a hard matter to *wear* out *these Notions*: They are

so

ſo *natural* and *obvious*; the *Proofs* of them are ſo *clear*; their *Reputation* and *Authority* in the World is ſo well *eſtabliſhed*; and the *Providence* of *God* ſo frequently *inculcates* them. Men may eaſily wear out all ſenſe of the *Beauty*, and of their *Obligations* to the *Heights* and *Perfections* of *Virtue*: But they cannot ſo eaſily do this in reference to *Virtue* in *general*; becauſe 'tis temper'd and accommodated to *Human Nature* and *Society*; and neceſſary to the tolerable *well-being* of the *World*. Men may ſoon, I confeſs, extinguiſh their *Chriſtianity*, but not *Humanity*: And while *this* remains, *Sin* will leave a *Stain* and *Guilt* behind it; and *Guilt* will be attended by *uneaſineſs* and *Fear*. The very *Pagans*, who had advanced *ſo far* in Wickedneſs, as to be *given up* to all *diſhonourable* Paſſions, and to *commit all uncleanneſs with greedineſs*, had not yet ſo *mortified* and *ſtupified* their *Conſciences*, but that *it* gave much *Diſturbance*, *Rom.* 1. *ver.* 32. 'tis ſaid of them, that *they knew the judgment of God, that they which committed ſuch things, were worthy of death.* And *Rom.* 2. 15. *Their conſciences* are ſaid *to accuſe and condemn them.* And 'tis of *very wicked* Men, that the *Author* to the *Hebrews* affirms, that *through fear of death they were all their life-time ſubject to bondage.*

But

But are there not, will ſome ſay, many *Ingenuous* and *Brave* Spirits, who have *diſperſed* theſe vain *Spectres*, and burſt thoſe ſuperſtitious *Fetters*, by which you labour to *ſcare* and *enſlave* the World? I do not doubt, indeed, but that there are *too many* who have vigorouſly endeavour'd to caſhier all *Principles* of Natural and Revealed *Religion*, and utterly to extinguiſh all *Conſcience* of *Good* and *Evil*. But *this* is ſuch an *Attempt*, in which, I confeſs, I could never have *believed*, that the moſt *daring ſinner* could have proved *ſucceſsful*, had not the *Scriptures* told me that there are ſome, *who are paſt feeling*, Eph. 4. 19. *of a ſear'd Conſcience*, 2 Tim. 4. 2. *who are not aſhamed when they have committed iniquity, neither can they bluſh*, Jer. 6. 15. *who call good evil, and evil good; that put darkneſs for light, and light for darkneſs; that put bitter for ſweet, and ſweet for bitter*, Iſa. 5. 20. *Such Sinners* there *are* then: But *what* does this amount to? *What* can *their* Senſe or Example *weigh*? I am ſure theſe *poor Wretches* are as far diſtant from any *true Happineſs*, as from *Senſe*; and deſerve our *Pity*, not *Imitation*. As will eaſily appear from theſe following *Conſiderations*.

1. 'Tis true, *Conſcience* depends upon *Opinion*: But what if this *Opinion* depend upon

upon *Senſe* and *Truth?* What if it be built upon the *Demonſtration of the Spirit and of Power?* In what a deplorable *Condition* are theſe *Men of Wit?* The *Fear* of an *angry God*, a *Judgment* to come, and *an Hell*, is no *common* or *ordinary Fear*. 'Tis not the *Fear* of a *ſcratch* or *wound* in the *Body*; of a *baffle* in the Purſuit of *Preferment*; or a *Diſappointment* in that of *Pleaſure*; 'tis not the *loſs* or the *forfeiture* of *Eſtate*, in part, or whole: 'Tis not a *Blot* upon our *Reputation*; 'tis not the *Death* of a *Child*, a *Brother*, or what is *more*, if *he* be ſuch, a *Friend*: 'Tis not any thing of *this* kind that is the *Object* of *this Fear*; but *Miſery* pure and unallay'd; complicated, accumulated *Miſery*: *Miſery* unalterable, incurable, and laſting as long as *Eternity*. Methinks before one ſhould *venture* on a *Sin*, which is *threatned* with ſuch a *ſtate* as this; and much more, before one ſhould reſolve to *continue* in it, it were reaſonable to be very *ſure*, that the *Notion* of a *Hell* were *falſe*, and the Doctrine of *Eternal Puniſhment* a *meer Bugbear*. Nay, I proteſt, in a matter of this *Importance*, I think one ſhould ſcarce truſt to a *Demonſtration*, unleſs it had paſſed the *Teſt* of the moſt *ſolid* and *Impartial* part of Mankind, and ſtood the *Shock* and *Trial* of many *Ages*. But, alas, after the utmoſt *Efforts* of *Wit*

and

and *Lust*, what has ever *yet* been produced, that has been able to undergo the *Examination* even of an *honest Man*? What *Arguments* have yet been started against a *Judgment to come*, that have been *able* to work upon *any* who were truly *serious* in the Point? And if a *Judgment to come*, why not an *Hell*? *Revelation* is plain; and *Reason* can find no Inconsistency in the Doctrine. *Human Laws* punish a *single* Offence sometimes with *Death* or *Banishment*; with *loss* of *Estate*: And by *this*, and divers *other* ways, extend the Punishment of the Criminal to his *Posterity*: That is, make it as *Eternal* as they *can*. And shall it be thought *unjust* in *God* to punish the *repeated* Provocations of an *impenitent* Life; the *Neglect of that great Salvation wrought* by the *Blood*, and *published* by the *Mouth* of *his dearly Beloved Son*; and all this *wilfully* in *Defiance* of the *Light* of the *Gospel*, and *Solicitations* of the *Spirit*; in Defiance of *Mercies* and *Chastisements*; shall it, I say, be thought *unjust* in *God* to punish *this* by a *miserable Eternity*? When *Infinite Goodness* has in vain *tried* all imaginable *means* to *reclaim* a *Sinner*, what has *he* to complain of, if *God* leave him to the *Effects* of his own *Choice*? *Sin*, as it alienates our *Affections* from *God here*, so must it certainly exclude *us* from *his Presence* and his

Favour

Favour hereafter. And what can be the Case of that *wretched Creature*, who is baniſhed *for ever* to thoſe *black* and *diſmal* Regions, which no *Ray*, no *Influence* of Divine *Goodneſs* can ever reach? *Where* ſhall thoſe *unhappy Creatures* dwell, which ſhall be chaſed by the *Preſence* and *Glory of God* out of the *new Heavens* and the *new Earth*, (or which rather can never approach either) *but* in that *outward Darkneſs*, which is parted from the World of the *Bleſſed* by an *impaſſable Gulph*? Ah then! if this be *ſo*, *what* do wretched Men *gain* by growing *impudent* in *Wickedneſs*? Alas! the more *inſenſible* Men are of the Deformity and Danger of *Sin*, the more *deſperate* their *ſtate*, the more *incurable* their *Diſeaſe*; and the nearer *they* to *Death* and *Deſtruction*: *My Spirit ſhall not always ſtrive with man.* *This* is indeed a *bleſſed Advantage*, to ſtand upon the brink of *Damnation*! 'Tis a *glorious Victory*, to have *defeated* all the Means of *Grace* and *Happineſs*! 'Tis an *Heroick Atchievement*, to be able to *extinguiſh* all true *Senſe* and *Reaſon*, as well as *Religion*, and become impregnable, impenetrable to all *Arguments*, to all *Motives* which either the tendereſt *Love* or the profoundeſt *Wiſdom* of *God* and *Man* can attack us by!

2. I cannot but think that thoſe *very* Men, who for the *moſt part* are *obdurate* and

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insensible, do suffer *some*, though *rare returns* of *Anxiety* and *Fear*. *Why* else are they such avowed *Enemies* to *Solitude* and *Retirement*? to all serious and calm *Reflections*, that they are ready to take up with a most trifling and contemptible *Business* or *Diversion*? nay, *tired* with a dull and tasteless *Repetition* of a *Folly*; they chuse to *repeat* it to their *Lives End*, rather than be *alone*, and *thoughtful*? What is this, but to *confess* that there is something *within* which they are afraid to *awaken*? That there is such a *Brightness* in Divine *Truth*, that they dare not open their *Eyes* upon it, lest it should fill their Souls with the *Terrors* of *God*. This *Height* of *Wickedness* then at best is a state fit only for *Fortunate Sinners*; who can rowl and tumble from *Folly* to *Folly*, from *one* Impertinence or Extravagance to *another*, *endlessly*: And yet what becomes of these poor Things, when a *Disaster*, when a *Disease*, nay, but a *wakeful* hour by Night forces them to *retire* into *themselves*?

3. A *Sinner* does not *soon* arrive at this state of *Insensibility*. It costs him very *dear* to grow *impudent* in his Lust. Many a *Pang*, many a *Torment* has he suffer'd first; often has he felt the *Wounds* of *Conscience*; often has he trembled and shrunk at the *Menaces* of *God*. The *Soul* can no more

more be reconciled to *Sin*, than the *Body* to *Exceſs*, but by *paſſing* thorough many *painful* and *ſickly* Fits, many *uneaſy* Pangs and Qualms. And is it not worth the *while* to *endure* ſo *much* in order to be *damned*? Is it not an infallible *Mark* of more than vulgar *Wiſdom*, to purchaſe *Miſery* at ſo *dear* a rate? To *endure hardſhip as good ſoldiers of Chriſt Jeſus*, for a *Crown*, a *never-fading Crown*, *this* with them is an Undertaking that deſerves to be *expoſed*, and *laſhed* with the utmoſt *ſeverity* of Spight and Confidence: But to *ſuffer*, as it were, *repeated Martyrdoms* to gain an *Hell*, this is what they think *becomes* Men of *their Parts* and *Gallantry*. Bleſſed God! to what degree of *Madneſs* and *Stupidity* may Men of the *fineſt* Natural Parts ſink, when *abandon'd* by Thee? or rather, when *they* themſelves *abandon Thee*, and that *Light* which Thou haſt ſet up in the *World*? Our *Lord* and *Maſter* thought the *Profits* and *Pleaſures* of the *whole* World a *poor* Compenſation for the *Loſs* of the *Soul*: *What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world*, &c. Mat. 16. But *theſe* Men rather than it ſhould *not* periſh for ever, will charge through *Shame* and *Pain*, *Remorſe* and *Sickneſs*, and *all* the *Obſtacles* that *God* has ſet between *us* and a deſperate Height of *Wickedneſs*.

4. Though

4. Though a *Sinner* may come to that pass, as to *suppress* his *Conscience*, and *master* his *Fears*, yet he must ever be *conscious* to himself of the *Fruitlessness* and the *Meanness* of a Course of *Sin*. He must needs be inwardly sensible, that he has *wearied* himself to commit Iniquity to *no purpose*; that his *Mind* has been *restless* and *tempestuous*, *like a troubled sea, casting up its own mire and dirt*: He must be conscious to himself, that *he* is *false* and *unjust*, *unconstant* and *ungrateful*, and in *Bondage* to *such* Lusts as are *mean* and *poor*, and injurious to his *Repose*, and which he has often *wished* himself *free* from. And *this* no doubt must be a *blessed* Condition, when a Man's *own Mind* does to his Face assure him, That *he* is *that* very thing which *all the world condemns and scorns*, and which he cannot *endure* to be *charg'd* with, without *resenting* it as the highest *Affront*! Certainly it were better that *all the world* should *call me Fool*, and *Knave*, and *Villain*, than that *I* should *call my self so*, and *know it* to be *true*. My *Peace* and *Happiness* depends upon my *own* Opinion of *my self*, not *that* of *others*: 'Tis the *inward* Sentiments that *I have* of *my self*, that *raise* or *deject* me; and my *Mind* can no more be pleased with any *Sensation* but its *own*, than the *Body* can be gratified by the Relishes of *another's Palate*.

5. The

5. The more *inſenſible* a *Sinner* grows, the more *intolerable* is the *Diſorder* and *Diſtraction* which *Sin* produces in his Affairs. While Men are under any little reſtraints of *Conſcience*; while they are held in by *Scruples*, and *Fears*, and Fits of *Regret*; while, in a word, they *ſin* with any *Modeſty*, ſo long *Sin* will tolerably comport with their *Intereſt* and *Reputation*; but as ſoon as they grow *inſenſible* and *impudent*, they paſs all *bounds*, and there is nothing ſo *dear* and *conſiderable* to them, which they will not *ſacrifice* to their *Wickedneſs*. Now Wife and Children, Friends, Eſtate, Laws, Vows, Compacts, Oaths, are no *ſtronger Ties* to them than *Sampſon's Withs*, or *Cords*. Such an one as *this* is very well *deſcribed* in the *Prophet*; *Thou art a ſwift Dromedary, traverſing her ways; a wild Aſs uſed to the wilderneſs, that ſnuffeth up the wind at her pleaſure; in her occaſion who can turn her away?* Jer. 2. 23. And again, he is fitly repreſented to an *Horſe ruſhing into the Battel*. He has as much *Contempt* for his *Safety* and *Happineſs*, as for *Reaſon* and *Religion*; he defies *Shame*, *Ruin*, and *Death*, as much as he does *God* and *Providence*: In one word, with an impudent and lewd *ſtupidity* he makes all the *haſte* he can to be *undone*; and ſince he *will* be ſo, it were *well* if he could be undone *alone*. I am ſure we

have too *many* Instances at *this day*, of the miserable and fatal *Effects* of *Atheism* and *Deism*, to leave any room to doubt whether I have *strained* the Point here or no.

Upon the whole it does appear, That *Sin* is a *great Evil*; and that the *Evil* of it is not *lessen'd* but *increased* by *Obduration*. And from hence the *Proposition* infer'd does naturally *follow*, That *Deliverance* from it is a *great Good*; so *great*, that if we estimate it by the *Evil* there is in *Sin*, *Health* to the *Sick*, *Liberty* to the *Captive*, *Day* to the benighted, weary, and wandring *Traveller*; a *Calm*, a *Port*, to *Passengers* in a *Storm*; *Pardon* to men *adjudged to death*, are but weak and imperfect *Images* or *Resemblances* of it. A *Disease* will at worst terminate with the *Body*, and *Life* and *Pain* will have an End *together*: But the *Pain* that *Sin* causes will endure to all *Eternity*; for *the worm dies not*, and *the fire will not be quenched*. The *Error* of the *Traveller* will be corrected by the approaching *Day*, and his *Weariness* refreshed at the next *Stage* he comes to; but he that errs impenitently from the *Path of Life*, is *lost* for *ever*: When the *Day of Grace* is once *set* upon him, no *Light* shall e're *recal* his wandring *Feet* into the *Path of Righteousness and Peace*; no *Ease*, no *Refresh-*

ment

ment ſhall e're relieve his *Toil* and *Miſery*. Whilſt the *Feet* of the *Captive* are loaded with *Fetters*, his *Soul* may enjoy its trueſt *Liberty*; and in the midſt of *Dangers* and *Dungeons*, like *Paul* and *Silas*, he may ſing *Songs of Praiſe and Triumph*: But the *Captivity of Sin* defiles, oppreſſes, and enſlaves the *Mind*, and delivers up the miſerable Man to thoſe *intolerable* and *endleſs* Evils, which inexorable *Juſtice* and Almighty *Wrath* inflicts upon *Ingratitude* and *Obſtinacy*. A *Storm* can but wreck the *Body*, a frail and worthleſs *Bark*; the *Soul* will eſcape ſafe to *Shore*, the *Bleſſed* Shore, where the happy *Inhabitants* enjoy an undiſturbed, an everlaſting *Calm*: But *Sin* makes *ſhipwrack of faith and a good conſcience*, and he that *periſhes* in it does but paſs into a *more miſerable* ſtate; *for on the wicked God will rain ſnares, fire, and brimſtone, ſtorm and tempeſt; this ſhall be their portion for ever*, Pſal. 11. And *laſtly*, A *Pardon* ſends back a *Condemned Criminal* to *Life*, that is, to Sins and Sufferings, to Toils and Troubles, which *Death*, if Death were the *utmoſt* he had to fear, would have *freed* him from: But *he* that is once *delivered* from *Sin*, is *paſt from Death to Life*, and from *this Life* of *Faith*, of *Love*, of *Hope*, ſhall ſoon paſs to *another* of *Fruition* and *Glory*.

§. 2. A *Second Fruit* of *Liberty* is *Good Works*. *Here* I will shew *Two* things: *First*, and this but *briefly*, That the *Works* of *Righteousness* contribute mightily to our *Happiness*; and that *Immediately*. *Secondly*, That *Deliverance* from *Sin* removes the great *Obstacles* and *Impediments* of *Righteousness*, and throws off that *Weight* which would otherwise *encumber* and *tire* us in our *Race*. 1. *Holiness* is no small *Pleasure*, no small *Advantage*, to him who is *exercised* therein. When *Nature* is *renewed* and *restored*, the *Works* of *Righteousness* are properly and truly the *Works of Nature*: And to *do good* to *Man*, and offer up our *Praises* and *Devotions* to *God*, is to gratify the *strongest* and most *delightful Inclinations* we have. These indeed, are at first *stifled*, and *oppressed* by *Original Corruption*, *False Principles*, and *Vicious Customs*: But when once *they* have broke through *these*, like *Seeds* through the *Earthy Coats* they are enclosed and imprisoned in, and are impregnated, warmed, and cherished by an *Heavenly Influence*, they naturally shoot up into *good Works*. *Virtue* has a Cœlestial *Original*, and a Cœlestial *Tendency*: *From* God it *comes*, and *towards* God it *moves*: And can it be *otherwise* than *amiable* and *pleasant*? *Virtue* is all *Beauty*, all *Harmony* and *Order*; and therefore we may view,

and

and review, conſider, and reflect upon it with *Delight*. It procures us the *Favour* of *God* and *Man*; it makes our *Affairs* naturally run *ſmoothly* and *calmly* on; and fills our Minds with *Courage*, *Chearfulneſs*, and *good Hopes*. In one word, *Diverſion* and *Amuſements* give us a *Fanciful* Pleaſure, an *Animal ſenſitive* Life, a *ſhort* and *mean* one: *Sin* a *deceitful*, *falſe*, and *fatal* one: *Only Virtue*, a *pure*, a *rational*, a *glorious*, and *laſting* one. And this is *enough* to be ſaid *here*: The *Lovelineſs* of *Holineſs* being a *ſubject* which ever and anon I have *occaſion* to engage in. 2. I am *next* to ſhew, That *Deliverance* from *Sin* removes the *Impediments* of *Virtue*. This will eaſily be made out, by examining what Influence *ſelfiſhneſs*, *ſenſuality*, and the *Love of this World*, which are the *three* great Principles or Sources of *Wickedneſs*, have upon the *ſeveral Parts* of Evangelical *Righteouſneſs*. 1. The *firſt Part* is that, which contains *thoſe Duties* that more immediately relate to *our ſelves*. *Theſe* are eſpecially *two*, *Sobriety* and *Temperance*. By *Sobriety*, I mean a ſerious and impartial Examination of things; or ſuch a ſtate of Mind as qualifies us for it. By *Temperance*, I mean the moderation of our Affections and Enjoyments, even in lawful and allowed Inſtances. From theſe proceed *Vi-*

gilance, Industry, Prudence, Fortitude; or *Patience* and *Steadiness* of mind in the prosecution of what is best. Without *these* 'tis in vain to expect, either *Devotion* towards *God*, or *Justice* and *Charity* towards *Man*. Nay nothing *good* or *great* can be accomplished without them: Since without them we have no ground to hope for, either the Assistance of Divine *Grace*, or the Protection and Concurrence of Divine *Providence*. *Only* the *pure* and *chast* Soul is a fit *Temple* for the Residence of the *Spirit*: And the *Providence* of *God* watches over none, or at least none have Reason to expect it should, but such as are themselves *vigilant* and *industrious*. But now, how repugnant to, how inconsistent with those Virtues, is that *Infatuation* of *Mind*, and that *Debauchery* of *Affections*, wherein *Sin* consists? How incapable, either of *Sobriety* or *Temperance*, do *selfishness*, *sensuality*, and the *love of this world*, render us? What a *false Estimate* of things do they cause us to form? How *insatiable* do they render us in our *Desire* of *such* things, as have but *false* and *empty* Appearances of Good? And how imperiously do they precipitate us into those *Sins*, which are the *Pollution* and *Dishonour* of our Nature? On the contrary, let man be but once *enlightned* by *Faith*; let him but once come

to

to believe, that his *Soul* is *himſelf*, that he is *a Stranger and Pilgrim upon Earth*, that *Heaven* is his *Country*, and that to do *good Works* is to *lay up his Treaſure* in it; let him, I ſay, but once believe *this*, and then, how *Sober*, how *Temperate*, how *Wiſe*, how *Vigilant*, and *Induſtrious* will he grow? And this he will ſoon be induced to *believe*, if he be not actually under the Influence of vicious *Principles*, and vicious *Cuſtoms*. When the *Mind* is undeceived and diſabuſed, and the *Affections* diſengaged, 'tis *natural* to Man to think *calmly*, and to Deſire and enjoy with a *Moderation* ſuited to *juſt* and *ſober* Notions of worldly things: For *this* is to think and act as a *Man*. A *Second Part* of *Holineſs* regards *God* as its immediate *Object*, and conſiſts in the *Fear* and *Love* of *Him*, in *Dependence* and *Self-Reſignation*, in *Contemplation* and *Devotion*. As to this, 'tis plain, that whoever is under the *Dominion* of any *Sin*, muſt be an *Enemy*, or at leaſt a *Stranger* to it. The *Infidel* knows no *God*; and the *Wicked* will not, or dares not, approach one. Their *Guilt*, or their Averſion keeps them from it. *Selfiſhneſs*, *Senſuality*, and the *Love of the World*, are inconſiſtent with the *Love of the Father*, and all the ſeveral *Duties* we owe him: They *alienate* the Minds of Men from *Him*, and ſet up *other* Gods in

his room. Hence the *Covetous* are pronounced guilty of *Idolatry*, *Col.* 3. 5. and the *Luxurious* and *Unclean* are ſaid to make *their belly their God*, and to *glory in their ſhame*, *Phil.* 3. 19. But as ſoon as a poor Man diſcerns that he has ſet his Heart upon *falſe* Goods; as ſoon as he finds himſelf *cheated*, and *deceived* in all his Expectations by the *World*, and is convinced that *God* is his proper and his Sovereign *Good*; how natural is it to *turn* his Deſires and Hopes from the *Creature* upon the *Creator*? How natural is it to *contemplate* his *Greatneſs* and *Goodneſs*, to *thirſt* impatiently for his *Favour*, and *dread* his *Diſpleaſure*? And *ſuch* a Man will certainly make the *Worſhip* of *God* a great part, at leaſt, of the *Buſineſs* and *Employment* of Life. With *this* he will *begin*, and with *this* he will *end* the Day; Nor will he reſt *here*; his Soul will be ever and anon *mounting* towards *Heaven*, in *Ejaculations*; and there will be ſcarce any *Action*, any *Event*, that will not *excite* him to *praiſe* and *adore God*, or engage him in ſome wiſe *Reflections* on his *Attributes*. But all *this*, will the *Looſe* and *Atheiſtical* ſay, may be well *ſpar'd*, 'tis only a vain and idle *Amuſement*. *War* and *Peace*, *Buſineſs* and *Trade*, have no *Dependence* upon it: *Kingdoms* and *Commonwealths* may *ſtand* and *flouriſh*, and ſenſible

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Men may be *rich* and *happy*, *without* it. But to this I *anſwer*, *Religion* towards *God* is the *Foundation* of all true *Virtue* towards our *Neighbour*. *Laws* would want the better part of their *Authority*, if they were not enforced by an *Awe* of *God*: The wiſeſt *Counſels* would have no *Effect*, did not *Virtue* and *Religion* help to execute them: *Kingdoms* and *Commonwealths* would be *diſſolved*, and burſt to pieces, if they were not united and held in by *theſe Bonds*: And *Wickedneſs* would reduce the *World* to one great *Solitude* and *Ruin*, were it not *tempered* and *reſtrained*, not only by the *Virtues* and *Examples*, but by the *Supplications* and *Interceſſions* too, of *devout* Men. Finally, this is an *Objection* fit for none to make, but the *Sottiſh* and the *Ignorant*; Men of *deſperate Confidence*, and *little Knowledge*. For who ever is *able* to *conſider*, by what *Motives Mankind* has ever been wont to be moſt ſtrongly *affected*; by what *Principles* the *World* has ever been *led* and *governed*; how great an Intereſt even *Superſtition* has had, either in the *Civilizing* and *Reforming* Barbarous Nations; or the *Martial* Succeſſes of the firſt *Founders* of *Monarchies*, and the like; whoever, I ſay, is *able* to *reflect*, though but ſlightly, on theſe things, can never be ſo ſilly, as to demand what the *uſe* of *Religion* is; or to imagin it *poſſible* to *root up* its *Authority* in the World.

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The *Third Part* of *Holiness* regards our *Neighbour*; and consists in the Exercise of *Truth*, *Justice*, and *Charity*. And *no where* is the ill Influence of *Selfishness*, *Sensuality*, and the *Love of the World*, more notorious than *here*: For these rendring us *impatient* and *insatiable* in our *Desires*, *violent* in the *Prosecution* of them, *extravagant* and *excessive* in our *Enjoyments*; and the *things* of this *world* being *few* and *finite*, and unable to *satisfy* such *inordinate* Appetites; we stand in *one anothers* Light, in *one anothers* way to *Profit* and *Pleasures*, or, too often at least, *seem* to do so: And this must unavoidably produce a thousand *miserable Consequences*. Accordingly, we daily see that these Passions, *Selfishness*, *Sensuality*, and the *Love of the World*, are the *Parents* of *Envy* and *Emulation*, *Avarice*, *Ambition*, *Strife* and *Contention*, *Hypocrisy* and *Corruption*, *Lewdness*, *Luxury* and *Prodigality*; but are utter *Enemies* to *Honour*, *Truth* and *Integrity*; to *Generosity* and *Charity*. To obviate therefore the mischievous *Effects* of these vicious *Principles*, *Religion* aims at implanting in the World *others* of a *benign* and *beneficent* Nature; *opposing* against the *Love of the World*, *Hope*; against *Selfishness*, *Charity*; and against *Sensuality*, *Faith*: And to the end the *different Tendency* of these *different Principles* may

may be the more conſpicuous; I will briefly compare the *Effects* they have in reference to our *Neighbour*. *Selfiſhneſs* makes a Man look upon the *World* as made for *him* alone; and upon *all* as his *Enemies*, who do any way *interfere* with, or *obſtruct* his *Deſigns*: It *Seals* up all our *Treaſures*; *confines* all our *Care* and *Thoughts* to our *private* Intereſt, Honour, or Pleaſure; *employs* all our *Parts*, *Power*, and *Wealth*, and all our *Time* too, in Purſuit of our *particular* Advantage. *Senſuality* tempts a Man to *abandon* the Care and Concern for his *Country*, his *Friends* and *Relations*, and *neglect* the *Duties* of his *Station*, that he may give himſelf to ſome ſortiſh and diſhonourable *Vice*: It prevails with him to refuſe *Alms* to the poor, *Aſſiſtance* to any publick or Neighbourly good Work, and even a *decent*, nay ſometimes a *neceſſary Allowance* to his *Family*, that he may waſte and laviſh out his Fortune upon ſome vile and expenſive *Luſt*. In a word, it makes him incapable of the Fatigues of *Civil Buſineſs*; and much more of the Hardſhips and Hazards of *War*: So that inſtead of imitating the glorious Example of *Uriah*, who would not ſuffer himſelf to be courted into the Enjoyment even of *allowed* Pleaſures, nor indulge himſelf in the Tenderneſſes and Careſſes of a *Wife* and

and *Children*, while *Joab* and the Armies of *Iſrael* were in the *Field*; *he*, on the contrary, *diſſolves* and *melts down* his Life and Fortunes in *Uncleanneſs* and *Luxury*, the ſhame and burden of his Country and his Family, at a time when not only the *Honour*, but the *Safety* of his *Country* lies at ſtake, and *Prince* and *People* defend it by their *Toil* and *Blood*. What ſhould I mention the *Love of the World*? Are not the *Effects* of it as viſible, amongſt us, as *deplorable*? Does not this whereever it reigns, fill all Places with *Bribery* and *Corruption*, *Falſhood*, *Treachery* and *Cowardiſe*? *Worſe cannot* be ſaid on't, and *more needs* not: For what *Societies* can *thrive*, or which way can *Credit* and *Reputation* be *Supported*? What *Treaſures*, what *Counſels*, what *Armies*, what *Conduct*, can ſave a People, where theſe *Vices* prevail? Let us now, on the other ſide, ſuppoſe *Selfiſhneſs*, *Senſuality*, and the *Love of the World*, caſhiered; and *Faith*, *Hope*, and *Charity*, entertained in their room; what a bleſſed *Change* will this effect in the World? How ſoon will *Honour* and *Integrity*, *Truth* and *Juſtice*, and a *publick Spirit* revive? How ſerviceable and *eminent* will theſe render *every* Man in his *Charge*? *Theſe* are the true *Principles* of great and brave *Actions*: *Theſe*, theſe alone, can render our *Duty* dearer to

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us than any *temporal* Conſideration: Theſe will enable us to do *good Works*, without an Eye to the *Return* they will make us: Theſe will make it appear to us very reaſonable, to *Sacrifice* Fortune, Life, every thing, when the *Honour* of *God*, and *publick good*, demand it of us. The *Belief* and *Hope* of *Heaven*, is a ſufficient *Encouragement* to *Virtue* when all others fail: The *Love of God, as our Supream Good*, will make us eaſily *ſurmount* the Conſideration of *Expence*, *Difficulty*, or *Hazard*, in ſuch Attempts as we are ſure will *pleaſe* Him; and the *Love of our Neighbour as our ſelves*, will make us *compaſſionate* to his *Evils* and *Wants*, *tender* to his *Infirmities*, and *Zealous* of *his good* as of *our own*. How *happy* then would *theſe* Principles make the *World?* And how much is it the *Intereſt* of *every* one to *encourage* and *propagate theſe*, and to *diſcountenance* and *ſuppreſs* the *contrary* ones? I have done with the *ſecond Effect* of *Chriſtian Liberty*; and will paſs on to the *Third*, as ſoon as I have made *two Remarks* on this laſt *Paragraph*. *Firſt*, 'Tis very evident from what has been ſaid in it, that ſolid *Virtue* can be *Graffed* on no *Stock*, but that of *Religion*: That *univerſal Righteouſneſs* can be rais'd on none but *Goſpel Principles*; who is *he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth*

lieveth that Jesus is the Christ? 1 Joh. 5. I do not *oppose* this *Proposition* against *Jew* or *Gentile*. *God* vouchsafed *in sundry times and in divers manners*, such *Revelations* of his *Truth*, and such *Communications* of his *Grace*, as he saw fit: And to *these* is their *Righteousness* therefore, *whatever* it was, to be *attributed*, not to the *Law* of *Nature* or *Moses*. But I *oppose* it against the *bold* Pretensions of *Libertines* and *Atheists* at *this day*. *Honour* and *Justice* in *their* Mouths is a vain *Boast*; and the *Natural Power* they pretend to over their *own* Actions, to *square* and *govern* them according to the Rules of *right Reason*, is only a *malicious* Design to *supplant* the *Honour* of Divine *Grace*; and is as *false* and *groundless* as *arrogant*. Alas! they *talk* of a *Liberty* which they do not *understand*: For did they but once admit *Purity* of Heart into their *Notion* of it, they would soon discern what *Strangers* they are to it. How is it possible, but that *they* should be the Servants of the *Body*, who reject and disbelieve the *Dignity* and *Pre-eminence* of the *Soul*? How is it possible, *they* should not be *lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God*, who either believe *no God*, or *none* that *concerns* himself much about us? And how can *they* chuse but be *selfi* and *sensual*, and doat upon *this World*, who expect *no better*,

better, who believe *no other?* Take away *Providence* and a *Life to come*, and what can *oblige* a Man to any *Action*, that ſhall *croſs* his temporal *Intereſt* or his *Pleaſure?* What ſhall *reward* his *eſpouſing Virtue*, when it has no *Dowry*, but *Loſſes*, *Reproaches* and *Perſecutions?* What ſhall *curb* him in the Career of a *Luſt*, when he may *commit* it, not only with *Impunity*, but as the World ſometimes goes, with *Honour* and *Preferment* too? Though, therefore, ſuch Men as theſe may poſſibly reſtrain their *outward Actions*, yet are they all the while *enſlaved* and *defiled* in their *Affections*; and the very *Liberty* they boaſt of in their *Conduct* and *Management* of *themſelves openly*, ſprings from their *ſecret Servitude* to ſome vile *Paſſion* or other. Nor yet can I be ſo ſoft and eaſy as to grant, that *ſuch Men* as theſe, either do or can *arrive* at the *Liberty* they pretend to: I mean, that of *Regulating* and *Governing* all their *outward Actions* by the Rules of *Virtue*. They too often throw off the *Diſguiſe*, which either *Hypocriſy* or *Enmity to Religion*, makes them put on; and *prove* too plainly to the World, that when they lay *Reſtraints* on themſelves in *this* or *that Sin*, 'tis only to *indulge* themſelves the more *freely* and *ſecurely* in *others*. *Secondly*, My *next* Remark is, That it is groſs

groſs Stupidity or Impudence, to *deny* a *Providence* and *another World*, when the *Belief* of *both* is ſo indiſpenſably *neceſſary* to the well-being of *this*. The Frame and Nature of *Man*, and the Neceſſities of *this World* require *both*. Without theſe, *ſelfiſhneſs* muſt undoubtedly be the *predominant* Principle. This would breed unreaſonable *Deſires*; and theſe would fill us with *Fears* and *Jealouſies*: So that a *State of Nature*, would indeed be a *State of War*; and our *Enmity* againſt one another would *not* be *extinguiſhed* by Civil *Society*; but only *concealed* and *reſtrained*, till a fit *Occaſion* for its breaking out ſhould preſent it ſelf: *Laws* would want that *Force*, *Commonwealths* that *Bond* or *Cement*, *Converſation* that *Confidence*, and our *Poſſeſſions* that *ſecurity* which is neceſſary to render them *Bleſſings* to us.

§ 3. A *Third Fruit* of *Chriſtian Liberty* is that *Relation* which it creates between *God* and *us*. We are no longer *of the World*, but are *ſeparated* and *ſanctified*, *devoted* and *dedicated* to *God*. Thus St. *Peter*, 1 *Epiſt.* 2. 9. *Ye are a choſen generation, a royal prieſthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people.* And thus St. *Paul*, Rom. 8. 15, 16. *Ye have not received the ſpirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the ſpirit*

ſpirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The ſpirit it ſelf beareth witneſs with our ſpirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Chriſt. God is *our God*; *we* are *his People*. *He* is *our Father*; and *we* are *his Children*, we are *ingraffed* into *his Family*. The *Conſequence* of this is, his *Dearly Beloved* and *Only Begotten Son*, is our *Advocate at his Right hand*, the *Propitiation for our Sins*, and *Interceſſor* for us. His *Spirit* reſides with us, to *comfort* and *aſſiſt* us; his *Angels* guard us, and miniſter to us: For we are no longer the *Object* of his *Wrath*, but of his *Love* and *Care*. How does the *Apoſtle* triumph on *this* Argument, *Heb.* 12. 18, 19, &c. *For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire; nor unto blackneſs, and darkneſs, and tempeſt, and the ſound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they who heard, intreated that the word ſhould not be ſpoken to them any more: (For they could not endure that which was commanded; and if ſo much as a beaſt touch the mountain it ſhall be ſtoned, or thruſt through with a dart: And ſo terrible was the ſight, that* Moſes *ſaid, I exceedingly fear and quake:) But ye are come unto Mount* Sion, *and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly* Jeruſalem; *and to an innumerable company of*

Angels; to the general Assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven; and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect: And to Jesus, the Mediator of the new Covenant; and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. And thus again, 1 Cor. 3. 2. *Therefore let no man glory in men; for all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollo, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.* These are *great* and *glorious* things. What *Dignity* and *Eminence* does this *Adoption* raise us to? What *Blessedness* flows from *Communion* and *Fellowship* with *God?* What can we *want*, or what can we *fear*, when we have so mighty an *Interest* in the *Sovereign of Heaven and Earth*; when all his Divine *Perfections* are employed to promote and secure our *Happiness? Now* sure we may *rejoice*, *now* we may *glory* and *triumph*; for certainly *all things* must *work together for our good.* But as *fallen Angels* envied the *Happiness* of *new-created Man*, so do *Apostate* and *Debauched Men* envy that of the *Godly*. And one of *these* will be apt to *say*, Hold, *Sir*, you run too *fast*; these glorious *Privileges* are *yet* but in the *Embrio*, and all your *Happiness* is *yet* but in the *Reversion*: Notwithstanding all these big words,

words, you must grant me that you are *yet* but in a *State of Probation*; that you are to undergo *Hardships* and *Difficulties*, and to live upon the thin Diet of *Hope* and *Expectation*: And so I think I might take you down from *Heirs* of God, to *Servants* at the best. Well, I will grant that we *yet live by Faith*, and *wait for the Hope of Glory*: Nor will I at *present* contend about *those* Pleasures that are but in the *bud*: I will for once quit all that *Preference* both as to *Nobility* and *Pleasure*, which *Adoption* and the full *Assurance* of *Hope* gives a *Godly* Man above a *Sinner*; and I will take the *state* of *a Child of God* to *be* as the *Objector* would *have* it; I will *suppose* him to be *under Age* till he come to *another* Life; and to *differ nothing from a Servant whilst* he is *so*, *though he be Heir of all*. Yet after all, if I can prove that 'tis our *Duty* to *serve God*, it will be no *contemptible Fruit*, no *small Commendation* of *Liberty*, that it *enables* us to *do* our *Duty*. And that it is our *Duty* to *serve God*, is plain: For is it not fit that *He* who *made* and still *upholds the World*, should *govern* it? Ought we not to pay *Obedience* to *His* Laws, whose Infinite *Perfections* and Immense *Beneficence* invest Him with an absolute and uncontroulable *Sovereignty* over us? *Whom* should we *honour* with our *Soul* and *Body*, but *Him* who is the *Author* of *both*?

To *whom* should we *devote* and *sacrifice* what we *have*, but to *Him* from *whom* we *received* all? *Whose Praise* should we *shew forth*, but *His* who has *called us out of darkness into his marvellous light*? *Whom* should we *obey* and *adore*, but *Him* who has *translated us out of Bondage* into *Liberty*, out of the *servitude* of *Satan* into the *Kingdom of his dear Son*; having *redeemed us* by the *Blood of his Son*, from that *Wrath* to which our *Sins* had deservedly *subjected* us? But this is not all; I shall prove it not only to be our *Duty*, but our *Honour* and our *Happiness* to *serve God*, even on the *supposition* on which the *Objection* proceeds, and which I at *present grant*. 1. 'Tis our *Honour* to *serve Him* whom *Angels* serve, to *whom all things in heaven and in earth do bow and obey*. 'Tis the highest *Prerogative* we can derive from *Grace* or *Nature*, to be *capable* of *serving Him*. His Divine *Perfections* transcend the *Conceptions* of *inferior Creatures*, and can be *known*, *contemplated*, and *adored* by none, but such as are *made but a little lower than the Angels*; such as are *endued*, not only with the *Light* of *Reason*, but with a far *brighter*, that of the *Spirit of God*. *This* is indeed *our* utmost *Perfection*, and must be our utmost *Ambition*: *This* alone makes us *considerable*, who are in all *other* respects but *mean* and *contemptible*; for we draw

but

but a *precarious* and *dependent* Breath; and the *World* we inhabit is a *dark* and *tempestuous* one, full of *Folly* and *Misery*. But even *this* will serve for a further *Confirmation* of what I *further* contend for. For being *indigent* and *needy*, standing at an *infinite* distance from *Self-sufficiency*, 'tis plain that what we cannot find *within* us, we must seek *without* us. Some *All-sufficient* Good we must *find* out; *something* we must *rest* in, and *repose* our selves upon; and *this will* be our *God*, *this* we shall *serve* and *adore*. And *what* shall this *be*? Shall we serve *Evil Spirits*? *These* are our avowed and inveterate *Enemies*, and *go about like a roaring lion, seeking whom they may devour*. Shall we serve the *Good*? This were to *dishonour* our *Nature*, to *serve* our *Fellow-creatures* and *Fellow-servants*: Besides that *such* will never *sacrilegiously* usurp their *Maker's Honour*, nor *admit* that *Service* which is *due* to *Him* alone. Shall we then serve *Man*? Alas! the *Breath* of *Great Ones* is *in their Nostrils*; their *Life is but a Vapour*, tossed to and fro with restless Noise and Motion; and then it *vanishes*; they *dye*, and *all their Thoughts and Projects perish*. What then, shall we at length be reduced to serve our *Lusts*? This is worse than *Pagan Idolatry*; *Stocks and Stones* indeed could not *help* or *reward* their *Votaries*; but our *Lusts*, like *wild* and

savage Tyrants, destroy where *they rule*, and oppress and overwhelm us with *Ruins* and *Miseries*, while we *servilely* court and flatter them. I have not done *yet*: I have proved it indeed to be our *Duty* and *Honour* to *serve God*; but these with *some* are *cold* and *lifeless Topicks*: I will now prove it to be our *Interest* and *Happiness*; and this too, laying aside at *present*, as I promised, the Consideration of a *future Reward*, and the *Joys* springing *from* it. To make good this *Assertion*, it will be necessary briefly to examine *two* things. *First*, The *Design* or *End*: And *Secondly*, The *Nature* of *this Service*. If we enquire after the *End* of it, 'tis evidently our *own* Advantage and Happiness. The *Lusts* or the *Humours*, the *Wants* and *Necessities* of Man, may put *him* upon *invading* our *Liberty*, or *purchasing* and *contracting* with us for our *Servitude*: But *God* is *All-sufficient* to *himself*, and has no *need* of our *Service*: When He will be *glorified* by *us*, 'tis that *we* may enjoy his *Protection* and *Bounty*: When He obliges us to *obey* his Commands, 'tis in order to *perfect* our *Natures*, and *purify* and *qualify* us for the Enjoyment of *Spiritual* and *Divine Pleasures*: When He enjoins us *Prayer*, 'tis because it does *exalt* and *enlarge* our Minds, and *fit* us for the *Blessings* it obtains: When He prescribes us *Self-Resignation*,

tion, 'tis because *he* will *chuse for* us, and *manage* our Affairs *better* than *we* can our *selves*. Let us in the *next* place consider the *Nature* of this Service. To *serve God*, what is it, but to *love* what is *infinitely lovely*; to *follow* the Conduct of *Infinite Wisdom*, and to repose our *Confidence* in *that* Being whose *Goodness* is as *boundless* as his *Power*? To *serve God*, 'tis to pursue the great *End* of our *Creation*, to act consonant to the *Dignity* of our *Nature*, and to *govern* our *Lives* by the Dictates of an *enlighten'd Reason*. How wisely has *Our Church* in one of her *Collects* expressed her *Notion* of the *Nature* of *God's Service*? *whose Service is perfect Freedom*. The *Devil* maintains *his* Dominion over us, by *infatuating* our *Understandings*, by *enfeebling* and *fettering* our *Wills*, by *deluding* and *corrupting* our *Affections*: But on the quite *contrary*, the more *clear* and *impartial* our *Understandings*, the more *free* and *absolute* our *Wills*, the more *unbiass'd* and *rational* our *Affections*, the *fitter* are we to *worship God*; nay indeed, we *cannot* worship Him at all as we *ought* to do, *unless* our Souls be *thus* qualified. Therefore is the *Service of God* called a *Rational Service*, λογικὴ λατρεία: and the *Word of God* is called ἄδολον γάλα, *Sincere Milk*; to signify to us, that in the *Service of God* all is *real* and *solid*

Good. *Such* is the *Perfection* of *our Natures*; the *Might* and *Joy* of *the Spirit*; the *Protection* and *Conduct* of *Providence*; and all the great and precious *Promises* of *God in Christ* are *Yea* and *Amen*. But in the *Service* of *Sin* all is *Cheat* and *Imposture*; and under a pompous *shew* of *Good*, the *Present* is *Vanity*, and the *Future*, *Repentance*; but such a *Repentance* as does not *relieve*, but *increase* the Sinners *Misery*.

This is *enough* to be said of the *Nature* of *God's Service*: And by the *Concessions* I made my *Objector* about the *Beginning* of this *Head*, I am *restrained* from taking notice of the *more glorious Effects* of it: Yet *some* there are, very *great* and *good* ones, that fall *not* within the compass of the *Objection*, which I will but just *mention*. The *first* is *Rest*. While *Religion* regulates the *Disorder*, and reduces the *Extravagance* of our *Affections*, it does in effect *lay* a *Storm*, and *compose* a *Mutiny* in our *Bosoms*. Whilst it *enlightens* our Minds, and teaches us the true *Value*, that is, at least the comparative *Worthlessness* of *Worldly* things, it *extinguishes* the *Troubles* which *present* Disappointments and Losses, and *prevents* those *Fears* which the Prospect of *future* Changes and Revolutions is wont to create in us. A *Mind* that is truly *enlighten'd*, and has no *Ambition* but for *Immortality* and *Glory*; whose

whose *Humility* with reference to these *temporal* Things is built upon a *true* Notion of the *Nature* of them; *this* Soul has entred *already* into its *Rest*. *That* is the *Doctrine* of our *Lord* and *Master*, Matth. xi. 28, 29. *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden*; that is, all ye that are oppressed by the *Weight* of your own *Cares* and *Fears*, that are *fatigu'd* and *toil'd* in the Designs and Projects of *Avarice* and *Ambition*, *and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.* I need not I think here shew, that the *more* we *fear* and *serve God*, the *more* we *love* and *admire Him*, the *more clear* is the *Understanding*, and the *more pure* the *Heart*: For the *more* we converse with *solid* and *eternal* Good, the more *insignificant* and *trifling* will *temporal* things appear to us; and the *more* the Mind *rejoices in the Lord*, the *oftner* 'tis *wrapt up* into *Heaven*, and as it were, *transfigured* into a *more glorious* Being, by the *Joy of the Spirit*, and the *Ardors* of *Divine Love*, the more *flat* and *insipid* are all *earthly* and *carnal* Satisfactions to it. *Another Effect* that attends our *shaking off* the *Dominion of Sin*, and our *devoting* our selves to the *Service of God*, is our being *purified* from *guilt*. The *Stains* of the *past* Life are washed off by *Repentance* and the

Blood

Blood of *Jesus*; and the *Servant* of *God* contracts no *new* ones by *wilful* and *presumptuous* Sin. *Now* therefore he can *enter* into *himself*, and *commune* with his own *Heart*, without any *Uneasiness*; he can *reflect* upon his *Actions*, and *review* each *day* when it is *past*, without inward *Regret* or *Shame*. To *break off* a *vicious* Course; to *vanquish* both *Terrors* and *Allurements*; when they perſuade to that which is *mean* and *baſe*; to be *Maſter* of one's *ſelf*, and *entertain* no *Affections* but what are *wiſe*, and *regular*, and *ſuch* as one has Reaſon to *wiſh* ſhould daily *increaſe* and grow *ſtronger*; *theſe* are things ſo far from meriting *Reproach* and *Reproof* from one's *own Mind*, that they are ſufficient to *ſupport* it againſt *all Reproaches* from *without*. Such is the *Beauty*, ſuch the *Pleaſure* of a well-eſtabliſhed *Habit* of *Righteouſneſs*, that it does *more* than *compenſate* the *Difficulties* to which either the *Attainment* or the *Practice* of it can expoſe a Man. *Laſtly*, He that is *free* from *Guilt*, is *free* from *Fear* too. And indeed *this* is the *only* way to get *rid* of *all* our *Fears*; not by *denying* or *renouncing God*, with *Atheiſts*, but by *doing the things that pleaſe Him*. He that is truly *Religious*, is the *only* Man who upon *rational* ground is raiſed above *Melancholy* and *Fear*: For *what* ſhould he *fear*? *God* is his *Glory*, his

his *Boaſt*, his *Joy*, his *Strength*; and if *God be for him, who can be againſt him? neither things preſent, nor to come; neither life, nor death, can ſeparate him from the love of God in Chriſt Jeſus.* There is *nothing* within the Bounds of *Time* or *Eternity* that he needs *fear*. *Man* cannot *hurt* him; he is *incompaſſed with the favour and loving-kindneſs of God, as with a ſhield.* But if *God* permit him to *ſuffer* for *Righteouſneſs* ſake, *happy* is he; this does but *increaſe* his *preſent Joy*, and *future Glory*. But what is moſt *conſiderable*, *Death* it ſelf cannot *hurt* him, *Devils* cannot *hurt* him; *The ſting of death is ſin, and the ſtrength of ſin is the law; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* For *there is no condemnation to them who are in Chriſt Jeſus, who walk not after the fleſh but after the ſpirit.* Theſe *Conſiderations* prove the *preſent* Condition of a *Servant of God happy*: *Happy* in *compariſon* of the *Looſe* and *Wicked*; but in *compariſon* with what he *ſhall* be *hereafter*, he is infinitely *ſhort* of the *Joy* and *Glory* of his *End*. In *this* reſpect indeed he is *yet* in a *ſtate* of *Trial* and *Trouble*, of *Diſcipline* and *Probation*; in *this* reſpect his *Perfection* and *Happineſs* do but juſt *peep* up above the *ground*; the *Fulneſs* and *Maturity* of *both* he *cannot* enjoy till he come to *Heaven*. And *this* is,

§. 4. The

§. 4. The *Last Fruit* of *Christian Liberty*. That *Heaven* will consist of *all* the *Blessings*, of *all* the *Enjoyments* that *Human Nature* when raised to an *Equality* with *Angels*, is *capable* of; That *Beauties* and *Glories*, *Joys* and *Pleasures*, will as it were like a *fruitful* and *ripe* Harvest *here*, grow up *there* in *all* the *utmost Plenty* and *Perfection* that *Omnipotence* it self will e're produce, is not at all to be *controverted*. *Heaven* is the *Master-piece* of *God*, the *Accomplishment* and *Consummation* of *all* his wonderful *Designs*, the *last* and *most endearing* Expression of *boundless Love*. And hence it is that the *Holy Spirit* in *Scripture* describes it by the *most taking* and the *most admired* things upon *Earth*; and yet we cannot but *think* that this *Image*, tho drawn by a *Divine Pencil*, must fall infinitely *short* of it: For what *temporal* things can yield *Colours* or *Metaphors strong* and *rich* enough to *paint Heaven* to the *Life*? *One* thing there is indeed, which seems to point us to a *just* and *adequate Notion* of an *Heaven*; it seems to excite us to *strive* and *attempt* for *Conceptions* of what we cannot *grasp*, we cannot *comprehend*; and the *labouring* Mind the *more* it *discovers*, *concludes* still the *more behind*; and *that* is, *The Beatifick Vision*. *This* is that which, as *Divines* generally *teach*, does *constitute Heaven*;

and

and *Scripture seems* to *teach* so *too*. I confess I have often *doubted*, Whether our *seeing God* in the *Life to come*, did necessarily *imply* that *God* should be the *immediate Object* of our *Fruition*: Or only, That we should *there*, as it were, *drink* at the *Fountain Head*; and being *near* and *dear* to *Him* in the *highest Degree*, should ever *flourish* in his *Favour*, and *enjoy* all Good, *heap'd up, pres'd down, and running over*. I thought the *Scriptures* might be easily *reconciled* to *this* sense; and the *Incomprehensible Glory* of the *Divine Majesty* inclin'd me to believe it the most *reasonable*, and most easily *accountable*. *Enjoyment*, and especially where an *Intelligent* Being is the *Object* of it, seem'd to *imply* something of *Proportion*, something of *Equality*, something of *Familiarity*. But ah! *what Proportion*, thought I, *can* there ever be between *Finite* and *Infinite*? What *Equality* between a *poor Creature* and his *Incomprehensible Creator*? What *Eye* shall gaze on the *Splendors* of his *Essential Beauty*, when the very *Light He dwells in* is *inaccessible*, and even the *Brightness* he *veils* himself *in*, is too *dazzling* even for *Cherubs* and *Seraphs*, for ought I know, to behold? Ah! *what Familiarity* can *there* be between this *Eternal* and *Inconceivable Majesty*, and *Beings* which He has formed out of *nothing*? And when on this occasion

I re-

I reflected on the *Effects* which the *Presence* of *Angels* had upon the *Prophets*, and saw *Human Nature* in *Man sinking* and *dying* away, because unable to sustain the *Glory* of one of their *Fellow-creatures*, I thought my self in a manner obliged to *yield*, and stand *out* no *longer* against a *Notion* which, though *differing* from what was generally *received*, seemed to have *more Reason* on its side, and to be *more intelligible*. But when I called to mind, that *God* does not disdain, even while we are in a *state* of *Probation* and *Humility*, of *Infirmity* and *Mortality*, to account us not only his *Servants* and his *People*, but his *Friends* and his *Children*; I began to *question* the *former* Opinion: And when I had survey'd the *Nature* of *Fruition*, and the various *Ways* of it a little more *attentively*, I wholly *quitted* it. For I observed, that the *Enjoyment* is *most transporting*, where *Admiration* mingles with our *Passion*: Where the beloved *Object* stands not upon the same *Level* with us, but *condescends* to meet a *Virtuous*, and *aspiring*, and *ambitious Affection*. *Thus* the happy *Favourite* enjoys a *gracious Master*: And *thus* the *Child* does with *respectful Love* meet the *tenderness* of his *Parent*: And the *Wisdom* and *Virtue*, which sometimes raises some *one* happy *Mortal above* the *common* size and height of *Mankind*,

kind, does not ſurely *diminiſh*, but *increaſe* the *Affection* and the *Pleaſure* of his *Friends* that enjoy him: *Again*, the *Nature* of *Enjoyment* varies, according to the various *Faculties* of the *Soul*, and the *Senſes* of the *Body*. *One* way we enjoy *Truth*, and *another Goodneſs*: *One* way *Beauty*, and *another Harmony*; and ſo on. Theſe things conſidered, I ſaw there was no neceſſity, in order to make *God* the *Object* of our *Fruition*, either to *bring Him* down to any thing *unworthy* of his *Glory*, or to *exalt* our *ſelves* to a *Height* we are utterly *uncapable* of. I eaſily ſaw, that we, who *love* and *adore God here*, ſhould when we enter into his *Preſence*, *admire* and *love* him *infinitely more*. For *God* being *infinitely amiable*, the *more* we *contemplate*, the *more clearly* we *diſcern* his *Divine Perfections* and *Beauties*, the *more* muſt our *Souls* be *inflamed* with a *Paſſion* for *Him*: And I have no reaſon to doubt, but that *God* will make us the moſt gracious *Returns* of *our Love*, and expreſs *His* Affections for *us*, in ſuch *Condeſcenſions*, in ſuch *Communications* of *Himſelf*, as will tranſport us to the *utmoſt* Degree that *created* Beings are *capable* of. Will not *God*, that *ſheds abroad his Love in our Hearts* by his *Spirit here*, fully *ſatisfy* it *hereafter*? Will not *God* who *fills* us *here* with the *Joy* of his *Spirit* by, I know not

not what *inconceivable* ways, *communicate* Himſelf in a more *raviſhing* and *Ecſtatick* manner to us, when we ſhall *behold him as he is*, and live for ever *encircled* in the *Arms* of his *Love* and *Glory*? Upon the whole then, I cannot but believe, that the *Beatifick Viſion* will be the *Supream* Pleaſure of *Heaven*: Yet I do not think that this is to *exclude* thoſe of an *inferior* Nature. *God* will be there, not only *all*, but *in* all. *We ſhall ſee him as he is*; and we ſhall *ſee* him *reflected*, in *Angels*, and *all* the *Inhabitants* of *Heaven*; nay, in *all* the various *Treaſures* of that *Happy Place*: But in far more *bright* and *lovely* Characters than in his *Works* here *below*. *This* is a ſtate, now, that anſwers *all Ends*, and ſatisfies *all Appetites*, let 'em be never ſo *various*, never ſo *boundleſs*. *Temporal* Good, nay a ſtate *accumulated* with all temporal Goods, has ſtill ſomething *defective*, ſomething *empty* in it: *That which is crooked cannot be made ſtraight, and that which is wanting cannot be numbred.* And therefore *the eye is not ſatisfied with ſeeing, nor the ear with hearing: but all things are full of labour*; *Man cannot utter it.* And if *this* were *not* the *ſtate* of *temporal* Things, yet that *one* Thought of *Solomon* that *he* muſt *leave* them, makes *good* the *Charge* of *Vanity and Vexation*: And the *contrary* is that which compleats *Heaven*; namely, that it is *Eternal*. Were

Heaven

Heaven to have an *End*, that *End* would make it *None*. *That Death* would be as much *more intolerable* than *this* here, as the *Joys* of *Heaven* are *above* those of *Earth*. For the *Terror*, and the *Evil* of it, would be to be estimated, by the *Perfection* of that *Nature* and *Happiness* which it would put an *End* to. To *Dye* in *Paradise*, amidst a *Crowd* of *Satisfactions*, how much *more intolerable* were this, than to *Dye* in those *accursed Regions* that bred continually *Briars* and *Brambles*, *Cares* and *Sorrows*? And now, I doubt not, but every one will readily acknowledge, that an *Heaven*, were it *believed*, were *such a Fruit* of *Christian Liberty*, *such* a *Motive* to it, as *none* could *resist*. Did I *believe* this, have I heard *one* say, I would *quit* my *Trade*, and all *Cares* and *Thoughts* of *this* World; and *wholly* apply my self to get that *other* you talk of. There was *no* need of going *thus* far: But this shews *what* the *natural Influence* of this Doctrine of a *Life to come* is; and that it is generally owing to *Infidelity*, where 'tis *frustrated* and *defeated*. *What* is in *this* Case to be *done*? What *Proof*, what *Evidences* are sufficient to beget *Faith* in *him*, who rejects *Christianity*, and all *Divine Revelation*? *He that hears not Moses and the Prophets*, *Christ* and his *Apostles*, *neither will he believe though one*

rose from the dead. This *Doctrine* of a *Life to come* was generally *believed* by the *Gentile* World. It was indeed very much *obscur'd*, but never *extinguished*, by the *Addition* of many *fabulous* and *superstitious* Fancies; so *strong* was the *Tradition* or *Reason*, or rather *both*, on *which* 'twas *built*. The *Jews* universally *endrac'd* it. The general *Promises* of *God* to *Abraham and his Seed*, and the several *Shadows* and *Types* of it in the *Mosaick* Institution, did *confirm* them in the *Belief* of a *Doctrine*, which, I do not doubt, had been *transmitted* to them even from *Enoch*, *Noah*, and *all* their pious *Ancestors*. Nor must we look upon the *Sadducees* amongst the *Jews*, or the *Epicureans* amongst the *Gentiles*, to be any *Objection* against this *Argument* of a *Life to come*, founded in *Tradition*, and the universal *Sense* of *Mankind*: Because *they* were not only *inconsiderable*, compared to the *Body* of the *Jewish* or *Pagan* World, but also *Deserters* and *Apostates* from the *Philosophy* and *Religion* received. To what End should I proceed from the *Gentile* and *Jew* to the *Christian*? Were *Christianity* entertain'd as it *ought*, the very *supposal* of any *Doubt* concerning a *Life to come* would be *impertinent*. *Here* we have numerous *Demonstrations* of it. Not only the *Fortune* of *Virtue* in *this* Life, which

which is often very *calamitous*, but even the *Origine* and *Nature* of it, do plainly evince a *Life to come*. For to *what* End can the *Mortification* of the *Body*, by *Abstinations* and *Meditations*, be enjoined, if there be *no Life to come*? What *need* is there of *Renovation*, or *Regeneration* by the *Word* and *Spirit of God*, were there *no Life to come*? One would think, the *common* End of this *natural* Life, might be well enough *secured* upon the *common* Foundation of *Reason* and *Human Laws*. What should I here add, the *Love* of *God*, and the *Merits* of *Jesus*? From *both* which we may derive many *unanswerable* Arguments of a *Life to come*. For though, when we reflect upon it, it appears as much above our *Merit*, as it is above our *Comprehension*, yet when we consider, that *Eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord*; what less than an *Heaven* can we expect from an *infinite Merit* and *Almighty Love*? The *Love* of *God* must be *Perfect* as *Himself*: And the *Merits* of *Jesus* must be estimated by the *Greatness* of his *Person*, and his *Sufferings*. *He* that cannot be *wrought upon* by *these* and the like *Gospel-Arguments*, will be found, I doubt, *impenetrable* to all *others*. 'Tis in *vain* to argue with *such* a one from *natural Topicks*: and therefore I will *stop* here.

I should now pass on to the *Third* Thing, the *Attainment* of *Christian Liberty*: But this *Chapter* is grown much too *big* already: And to the consideration of the *Fruit* of *this Liberty*, which I have so long insisted on, nothing *more* needs to be added, but the Observation of those *Rules*, which I shall lay down in the *following* Chapters. For *whatever* Advice will *secure* the several *Parts* of our *Liberty*, will consequently secure the *whole*. I will therefore *close* this *Chapter* here; with a brief *Exhortation*, to endeavour after *Deliverance* from *Sin*. How *many* and *powerful Motives* have we to it? Would we free our selves from the *Evils* of *this* Life? Let us dam up the *Source* of them, which is *Sin*. Would we surmount the *Fear* of *Death*? Let us *disarm* it of *its Sting*, and that is *Sin*. Would we *perfect* and *accomplish* our *Natures* with all *excellent* Qualities? 'Tis *Righteousness*, wherein consists the *Image of God*, and *Participation* of the *Divine Nature*: 'Tis *the cleansing our selves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and the perfecting holiness in the fear of God*, that must *transform us from glory to glory*. Would we be Masters of the most glorious *Fortunes*? 'Tis *Righteousness* that will make us *Heirs of God, and Joint-Heirs with Christ*: 'Tis the *Conquest* of our *Sins*, and the *abounding in Good works*,

works, that will make us *rich towards God*, and *lay up for us a good foundation for the life to come*. Are we ambitious of *Honour*? Let us *free* our ſelves from the *ſervitude* of *Sin*. 'Tis *Virtue* only, that is truly *Honourable* and *Praiſe-worthy*: And *nothing* ſurely can entitle us to ſo *noble* a *Relation*; for this *allies* us to *God*. For as our *Saviour* ſpeaks, *they* only are the *Children of Abraham, who do the Works of Abraham*; the *Children* of *God*, who *do* the *Works* of *God*. Theſe are *they*, who are *born again*: *not of the will of the fleſh, or of the will of man*; *but of God*. Theſe are *they*, who are *incorporated into the Body of Chriſt*; and being *ruled* and *animated* by *his Spirit*, are *entitled* to all the bleſſed *Effects* of *his Merit* and *Interceſſion*. Theſe are *they*, in a word, who have *overcome*, and *will*, one day, *ſit down with Chriſt in his Throne*; *even as he alſo overcame, and is ſet down with his Father in his Throne*, Rev. 3. 21. Good God! How *abſurd* and *perverſe* all our *Deſires*, and *Projects* are! We complain of the *Evils* of the *World*; and yet we *hug* the *Cauſes* of them, and *cheriſh* thoſe *Vices*, whoſe *fatal* Wombs are ever big with numerous and intolerable *Plagues*. We *fear Death*; and would get *rid* of this *Fear*, not by *diſarming*, but *ſharp-*

ning its *Sting*; not by *subduing*, but *forgetting* it. We *love Wealth* and *Treasure*: But 'tis that which is *Temporal*, not *Eternal*. *We receive Honour one of another*; *but we seek not that which comes from God only.* We are fond of *Ease* and *Pleasure*; and at the same time we *wander* from those *Paths* of *Wisdom*, which alone can *bring* us to it. For, in a word, 'tis this *Christian Liberty* that makes Men *truly free*: Not the being in bondage to *no Man*, but to *no Sin*: Not the doing what we *list*, but what we *ought*. 'Tis *Christian Liberty* that makes us *truly great*, and *truly glorious*: For this alone renders us *Serviceable* to *others*, and *Easy* to our *selves*; *Benefactors* to the *World*, and *delightsome* at *home*: 'Tis *Christian Liberty* makes us *truly prosperous*, truly *fortunate*; because it makes us *truly happy*, *filling us with joy and peace*, and *making us abound in hope, through the Power of the Holy Ghost.*

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Of Liberty, as it relates to Original Sin.

WHatever Difficulties the Doctrine of Original Sin really be involved in, or ſeem at leaſt to ſome to be ſo, they will not concern me, who am no further obliged to conſider it, than as it is an Impediment of Perfection: For though there be much Diſpute about Original Sin, there is little or none about Original *Corruption*; the *Reality* of this is generally acknowledged, though the *Guilt*, the Sinfulneſs or Immorality of it, be controverted. And though there be Diverſity of Opinions concerning the Effects of Original *Corruption* in Eternity, yet there is no Doubt at all made but that it incites and inſtigates us to actual Sin; and is the Seed-plot of Human Folly and Wickedneſs. All Men, I think, are agreed, that there is a Byaſs and ſtrong Propenſion in our Nature towards the Things of the World, and the Body: That the ſubordination of the Body to the Soul, and of the Soul to God, wherein conſiſts Righteouſneſs, is ſubverted and overthrown: That we have Appetites

which clash with, and oppose the Commands of God; not only when they threaten Violence to our Nature, as in the Cases of Confession and Martyrdom, but also when they only prune its Luxuriancy and Extravagance: That we do not only desire sensitive Pleasure, but even to that Degree, that it hurries and transports us beyond the Bounds that Reason and Religion set us. We have not only an Aversion for Pain, and Toil, and Death, but to that Excess, that it tempts us to renounce God, and our Duty for the sake of Carnal Ease, and Temporal safety. And finally, that we are so backward to entertain the Belief of revealed Truths, so prone to terminate our Thoughts on, and confine our Desires within this visible World as our Portion, and to look upon our selves, no other than the mortal and corruptible Inhabitants of it; that this makes us selfish and sordid, proud and ambitious, false, subtle, and contentious to the endless Disturbance of Mankind and our selves. That this, I say, is the state of Nature, that this is the Corruption we Labour under, all Men, I think, are agreed: And no wonder; for did a Controversy arise about this, there would be no need to Appeal any further for the Decision of it, than to one's own Experience;

perience; this would tell every one that thus it is in Fact; and Reaſon, if we will conſult it, will tell us why it is ſo: For what other than this can be the condition of Man, who enters the World with a Soul ſo dark and deſtitute of Divine Light, ſo deeply immers'd and plung'd into Fleſh and Blood, ſo tenderly and intimately affected by Bodily Senſations; and with a Body ſo adapted and ſuited to the Things of this World, and faſtned to it by the Charms of Pleaſure, and the Bonds of Intereſt, Convenience and Neceſſity? This Account of Original Corruption agrees very well with *that* St. *Paul* gives us of it, *Rom.* 7. and elſewhere: And with that Aſſertion of our *Lord* and *Maſter*, on which he builds the neceſſity of *Regeneration* by *Water* and the *Holy Spirit*, John 3. 6. *That which is born of the fleſh, is fleſh; and that which is born of the ſpirit, is ſpirit.* Having thus briefly explained, what I mean in this Chapter by *Original Sin*, I am next to conſider theſe two things.

1. How far this Diſtemper of Nature is curable.

2. Which way this Cure is to be effected.

As to the firſt Enquiry, I would not be under-

underſtood to proceed in it with a regard to all the *Regenerate* in general, but only to the *Perfect*; for the ſtrength of Original Sin cannot but be very different in new Converts, or Babes in Grace, and in ſuch as are advanced to an Habit of Righteouſneſs. This being premiſed, I think, I may on good ground reſolve, That Original Sin in the *Perfect* Man, may be ſo far reduced and maſtered, as to give him but very *rare* and *ſlight* Diſturbance. This ſeems to me evident from the great Change that muſt be wrought in him who is converted from a Sinner into a Saint; *If any Man be in Chriſt, he is a new creature: old things are paſt away, behold all things are become new*, 2 Cor. 5. 17. And it is hard to conceive this new Nature, without new Propenſions and Inclinations, not only different from, but repugnant to our former Original and Corrupt ones; or at leaſt we muſt ſuppoſe this new Creation, ſo far to have reformed and corrected the Man, that Original Corruption has loſt the Strength and Force which before it had. This will be more clear yet, if we obſerve never ſo ſlightly, the ſeveral Parts of this great Change. Firſt, The Soul of an excellent Perſon is filled with an unfeigned and habitual Sorrow for, and Deteſtation of all Sin; *I hate*, ſaith the *Pſalmiſt*, *every falſe way*. And

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how inconſiſtent is the ſtrength and heat of corrupt Propenſions, with the Tears and Averſions of a true Penitent? How tame is the Body, how pure the Mind, when the Man is poſſeſſed with a firm and holy Indignation againſt Sin, when he diſſolves in the pious Tenderneſs of a contrite Spirit! Next, the Soul of a Good Man, is poſſeſſed with an ardent Love of *God*, and of *Jeſus*; with a firm Belief, and a ſteady Hope of a bleſſed Eternity; with enlightened Eyes he beholds the Vanity of all earthly Things, and admires the Solidity, the Weight, and Duration of Heavenly Glory: *He is riſen with Chriſt*, and therefore *ſeeks thoſe things that are above, where Chriſt ſits on the right hand of God: He has ſet his affections on things above, and not on things on the earth; for he is dead, and his life is hid with Chriſt in God.* And muſt we not now ſuppoſe ſuch a one cleanſed and purified from all corrupt Affections, when the very bent of his Soul is quite another way? Muſt we not ſuppoſe the Force and Strength of depraved Nature, overpowered and ſubdued by theſe Heavenly Affections? How mortified muſt ſuch a Man be to the World and to the Body? How feeble is the Oppoſition, that inferiour Nature can raiſe againſt a Mind inveſted with ſo abſolute and ſovereign Authority, and endowed with Light

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and Strength from above? Laſtly, The Perfect Man has not only crucified the Inordinate and ſinful Luſts and Affections of the Body, but has alſo obtained a great Maſtery, even over the *natural Appetites* of it; how elſe can it be that his *Deſires* and *Hopes* are in *Heaven*; that he *waits for the Lord from thence*; that he deſires to be *diſſolved* and *to be with Chriſt*; and *groans* to *be rid* of the *corruptible Tabernacle* of the *Body*? He that is thus above the *Body*, may certainly be concluded, to be in ſome degree above, even the moſt *natural Appetites*. He that has ſet himſelf free in a great Meaſure, even from his Averſion to Death, and in his Affection at leaſt very much looſen'd the bond, the knot, that unties Soul and Body, may certainly very reaſonably be preſumed to be much more above all covetous, ambitious, or wanton Inclinations. Theſe are the Grounds on which I attribute to the Perfect Man, ſo high a Degree of Freedom from Original Sin as I do in the Propoſition laid down.

2dly. But yet I do not in the leaſt think, that the moſt Perfect Man upon Earth can ſo extinguiſh the ſparks of Original Corruption, but that if he do not keep a Watch and Guard upon himſelf, they will gather ſtrength and revive again: And the Reaſon of this is plain; becauſe it has a

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Foundation in our very Nature. The Diſpute concerning the Exiſtence of Original Corruption in us after Baptiſm, or Regeneration, is, methinks, a very needleſs one: For if it be about the Notion we ought to entertain of it, that is, whether it be properly Sin or not, this is a Contention about Words; for what ſignifies it by what Name we call this Remainder of Original Pravity, when all grant, that the Stain and Guilt of it, is waſhed off and pardoned? But if it be about the Force and Efficacy of it, this indeed is a Controverſy of ſome Moment; but a very fooliſh one on one ſide: For to what purpoſe can it be, to ſay a great many ſubtil and puzling Things againſt a Truth, that every Man feels and experiments at one time or other? Upon the whole then, I may thus deſcribe the Liberty of the Perfect Man with reſpect to Original Sin: He has *mortified* it, though not utterly *extirpated* it; he has *ſubdued* it, though not *exterminated* it; and therefore he is not only free from ſinful and inordinate Luſts and Affections, but alſo, in a far greater meaſure than other Men, from thoſe Infirmities and Irregularities which are, as it were, the ſtruglings and Ebullitions of Original Sin, not yet ſufficiently tam'd. He has advanced his Victory very far, even over his natural Appetites;

tites; he has no ſtronger Inclination for the Body, or for the World, and the Things of it, than ſuch as becomes a Man that is poſſeſſed with a deep ſenſe of the Vanity of this World, and the Bleſſedneſs of another. The World is in a high Degree crucified to him, and he counts all things but dung and droſs in comparison with the Excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus his Lord. His Sorrows and his Joys, his Deſires and his Fears, be the occaſion never ſo juſt or lawful, paſs not the modeſt Bounds of a wiſe Moderation. He deſires without Impatience, cares and contrives, hopes and purſues, without Anxiety or Sollicitude; he is cautious without Fear and Puſillanimity; he is ſad without Dejection or Deſpondency, and Pleaſant without Vanity. All this indeed ſhews him, not only to have conquered Sin and Folly, but in a great meaſure alſo, his natural Propenſion to them. But after all, this happy Creature muſt remember, that he is ſtill in the Body; in the Body, whoſe Appetites will ſoon paſs beyond their due Bounds, if he be indulgent or careleſs: He muſt remember that he is not immutably holy, his Underſtanding is not ſo clear and bright, but that it may be deceived; nor the Bent of his Affections ſo ſtrongly ſet upon good, but that they may be

be perverted; and therefore he must be sober and vigilant, and fear always. Thus have I stated the Cureableness of our Original Corruption. And as I think, I have plainly the Countenance of Scripture, so I do not see, that I in the least clash with that Clause in the Ninth Article of our Church, which affirms concerning Original Sin thus: *And this Infection of Nature doth remain, yea, in them that are Regenerated, whereby the Lust of the Flesh, called in Greek* Φρονημα σαρκος, *which some do expound the Wisdom, some Sensuality, some the Affection, some the Desire of the Flesh; is not subject to the Law of God.* For this must not be understood surely, as if the Flesh did always Lust against the Spirit in the Regenerate, but only that the Regenerate themselves are liable and obnoxious to these Lustings; which, on supposal, that the Perfect Man were here thought upon by the Compilers of this Article, imports no Contradiction to any thing I have delivered. The Truth is, I have asserted no more concerning the Cureableness of Original Corruption, than what is necessary to secure the *Interest* of *Holiness*, as well as the *Honour* of the *Word* and *Spirit*. I have too often had occasion to observe, that the stating our Obligation to reduce Original Corruption too laxly, ministers not a little

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to the Carnal Confidence of ſupine and careleſs Perſons. How greedily do ſome imbibe, and how fond are they of this Notion, that the Fleſh, even in the Regenerate, does always Luſt againſt the Spirit? And the next thing is, to look upon their darling Errors, as unavoidable Infirmities, flowing from the incurable Diſtemper of Original Sin. To the end therefore, that under Colour and Pretence of the Impoſſibility of a perfect Cure and Reſtitution of our Nature to perfect Innocence and unſpotted Purity, we may not ſit down contented in an impure State, and never advance to thoſe Degrees of Health and Innocence, which we may, and ought actually to arrive at, I think fit here, to guard the Doctrine of Original Sin, with this one general Caution.

That we be very careful not to miſtake Contracted, for Natural Corruption; not to miſtake a Super-induced Nature, defaced by all the Slime and Mud which popular Errors and Faſhions leave upon it, for Original Nature, or Nature in that State in which it enters the World. 'Tis, I doubt, a very hard thing to find but one arrived at any maturity of Years, in whom Nature is the ſame thing now that it was in the Womb or the Cradle; in whom there are no worſe Propenſions than what

what neceſſarily flow from the Frame and Compoſition of his Being. Alas! our Original Depravation, be it what it will, is very betimes improved by falſe Principles and fooliſh Cuſtoms; by a careleſs Education, and by the Blandiſhments and Inſinuations of the World: And every Man is ſo partial to himſelf, that he is very willing to have his Defects and Errors paſs under the Name of Natural and Unavoidable ones, becauſe this ſeems to carry in it its own Apology. This is a fatal Error, and continues Men in their Vices; nay, gives them peace in them too, to their Lives End: For why ſhould not a Man forbear attempting what he deſpairs of effecting? To prevent which, I earneſtly deſire my Reader to conſider, that all who have treated this Doctrine of Original Sin with any Solidity or Prudence, do carry the Matter as far at leaſt, as I have done: They teach not only that Original Corruption may be *Prun'd* and *Lop'd*, but that it may be *cut down*, *mortified*, and *dried up*. That ſince no Man can aſſure himſelf how far he may advance his Conqueſt over his natural Corruption, and the Intereſt of every Man's Safety and Glory obliges him to advance it as far as he can, he muſt never ceaſe fighting againſt it, while it fights againſt him. That ſince every Sin is ſo

far mortal as it is voluntary, and has as much Guilt in it as Freedom, every Man ought to be extremely jealous, leſt he be ſubject to any vicious Inclination, that is in reality the Product, not of Nature, but of Choice. And laſtly, ſince though much leſs than Habitual Goodneſs may conſtitute a Man in a ſtate of Grace, yet nothing leſs can produce Perfection, or a conſtant Aſſurance of Eternal Happineſs; therefore no Man ought to acquieſce, while he ſees himſelf ſhort of this; and every Man ſhould remember, that his Goodneſs ought to conſiſt in a Habit of thoſe Virtues to which he is by Nature the moſt averſe. I have now diſpatched my firſt Enquiry, and reſolved how far Original Sin is curable. The next is,

§. 2. How this Cure may be effected. And here 'tis plain what we are to aim at in general: For if Original Righteouſneſs conſiſts, as I think it cannot be doubted, in the Subordination of the Body to the Soul, and the Soul to God; and Original Corruption, in the Subverſion of this Order; then the Cure muſt conſiſt in reſtoring this Subordination, by the weakning and reducing the Power of the Body, and by quickning and ſtrengthning the Mind, and ſo re-eſtabliſhing its Sovereignty and Authority.

thority. The Scriptures accordingly let us know that this is the great Deſign of Religion, and the great Buſineſs of Man, 1 *Cor.* 9. 25. *And every man that ſtriveth for the maſtery, is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible.* And this St. *Paul* illuſtrates and explains by his own Example, in the following Words: *I therefore ſo run, not as uncertainly; ſo fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into ſubjection.* The Preference given to the Cares and Appetites of the Body, or of the Mind, is the diſtinguiſhing Character which conſtitutes and demonſtrates Man either Holy or Wicked: *They that are of the fleſh, do mind the things of the fleſh; and they that are of the Spirit, the things of the Spirit*, Rom. 8. 5. And the Threats of the Goſpel belong to the Servants of the Fleſh, its Promiſes to the Servants of the Spirit: *For if ye live after the fleſh, ye ſhall dye; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye ſhall live*, Rom. 8. 13. *He that ſoweth to his fleſh, ſhall of the fleſh reap corruption; but he that ſoweth to the Spirit, ſhall of the Spirit reap life everlaſting*, Gal. 6. 8. I grant that in theſe places and elſewhere very commonly, as by the Spirit is meant the Mind enlightened and aided by the Grace

of God; ſo by the Body or Fleſh is meant our inferior Nature; not juſt ſuch as it proceeds out of the Womb, but as it is further depraved by a Carnal and Worldly Converſation. However ſince *Original* is the Seed or Root of *Voluntary* or Cuſtomary Corruption, theſe Texts do properly and directly enough ſerve to the Confirmation of the Doctrine for which they are alledg'd. This then is the great Duty of Man, this is the great End which he is always to have in his Eye, the mortifying the Body, and entirely ſubjugating it to the Reaſon of the Mind. Here the Chriſtian Warfare muſt begin, and here end; for he who has crucified the Body, with the Luſts and Affections thereof, has entred into Reſt, as far as this Life is capable of it: He that lays the Foundation of Morals here, does build upon a Rock; and he that here puſhes his Succeſs to the utmoſt Point, has reached the higheſt Round in the Scale of Perfection, and given the finiſhing Strokes to Holineſs and Virtue. This I ſay then; He that will be free, muſt lay down as a general Rule to himſelf, from which he muſt reſolve never to ſwerve, That he is by all rational and poſſible Methods to diminiſh the Strength and Authority of the Body, and increaſe that of the Mind. By this we ought to judge of the Conve-

Conveniences or Inconveniences of our Worldly Fortunes; by this we are to determine of the Innocence or Malignity of Actions; by this we are to form and eſtimate our Acquaintance and Converſation, and by this we are to judge of the Bent and Tendency of our Lives; by this we are to regulate our Diverſions; by this we may reſolve of the Nature and Degree of our Pleaſures, whether lawful, whether expedient, or not: And in one word, by this we may paſs a true Sentence upon the Degrees and Meaſures of our Natural Affections. There are many things that are in their own nature indifferent enough, that prove not ſo to me; and there is ſuch a Latitude in the Degrees and Meaſures of Duty and Deviations from it, that it is a very hard matter in ſeveral Caſes to define nicely and ſtrictly what is lawful or unlawful: But I am ſure, in all Caſes this is a wiſe and ſafe Rule, that we are to aim at the ſtrengthning the Authority of our Minds, and the weakning the Force and Power of our carnal Appetites. By conſequence, every Man ought to examine himſelf, by what Arts, by what Practices the Light of his Underſtanding comes to be obſcured, the Authority of his Reaſon weaken'd, and the Tenderneſs of his Conſcience to be ſo much blunted and worn off: And when he has diſcovered this, he

muſt avoid theſe things as Temptations and Snares; he muſt ſhun theſe Paths, as thoſe that lead to Danger and Death; and whatever he finds to have a contrary Tendency, theſe are the things that he muſt do, theſe are the things that he muſt ſtudy, contrive, and follow. How happy would a Man be, how perfect would he ſoon grow, if he did conduct himſelf by this Rule? How little need would he have of outward Comforts; how little value would he have for Power and Honour, for the State and Pride of Life? How little would he hunt after the Pleaſures of Senſe? What Peace ſhould he maintain within, when he ſhould do nothing that were repugnant to the Reaſon of his Mind? What Joy and Hope would he abound with, when he ſhould have ſo many daily Proofs of his Integrity, as the living above the Body would give him? And how would all this ſtrengthen and exalt the Mind; what Flights would it take towards Heaven, and how invincible would it prove to all Temptations? Happy and Perfect that Man, who has the Kingdom of God thus within him, whoſe Life is hid with Chriſt in God! when Chriſt who is his Life ſhall appear, he alſo ſhall appear with him in Glory. This is a comprehenſive Rule, and if well purſued, ſufficient of its

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ſelf to do the Work I am here aiming at: But that it may be more eaſily reduced to Practice, I think it not amiſs to take a more particular View of it: And then it may be reſolved into theſe two:

1. We muſt lay due Reſtraints upon the Body.

2. We muſt invigorate and fortify the Mind, partly by the Light of the Goſpel, and the Grace of the Holy Spirit; and partly by accuſtoming it to retire and withdraw it ſelf from the Body.

§. 1. As to the Reſtraints we are to lay upon the Body, what they are, we eaſily learn from the Scriptures: For Firſt, Theſe expreſly forbid us to gratify the Luſts and Affections of the Fleſh; and that not only becauſe they are injurious to our Neighbour, and a diſhonour to our holy Profeſſion, but alſo becauſe they have an ill Influence upon the Strength and Liberty, the Power and Authority of the Mind. *Dearly beloved, I beſeech you as ſtrangers and pilgrims, abſtain from fleſhly luſts which war againſt the ſoul*, 1 Pet. 2. 11. And whoever enters into the account of things, will eaſily diſcern this to be true: There is a Deceitfulneſs in Sin, a Senſuality in Luſt: Who ſees not that there is more Attraction in the Pride and Oſtentation of

Life, than in the Simplicity and Plainneſs of it? That there is more Temptation and Allurement in Riot and Luxury, than in Frugality and a Competency? That the Imagination of a *Solomon* himſelf cannot but be wretchedly abuſed, if he give it leave to wander and wanton in Variety? In a word, If the Mind follow a Carnal or Worldly Appetite and Fancy in all its Exceſſes and Debauches, it will ſoon find it ſelf miſerably inſlaved and intoxicated; it will be wholly in the Intereſt of the Body, and wholly given up to the Pleaſures of it. Secondly, Though the Scripture do not prohibit ſome *States* or *Conditions* of this Life, which ſeem as it were more nearly *allied* to, or at leaſt-wiſe at leſs diſtance from the *Luſts of the Fleſh*, than others are, yet it forbids us to *covet* and *purſue* them. Thus St. *Paul*, Rom. 12. 16. *Mind not high things*. The Apoſtle does not here oblige any Man to degrade himſelf beneath his Birth, or to fly from thoſe Advantages which God's Providence and his own Merits give him a juſt Title to; but certainly he does oblige the Chriſtian not to aſpire ambitiouſly to Great Things, nor fondly to pride himſelf in Succeſſes of this kind. So when a little after he commands us *in honour to prefer one another*, certainly he does not teach how to Talk, but

but how to Act; not how to Court and Compliment, but how to deport our ſelves conſonant to thoſe Notions with which Charity towards our Neighbour, and Humility towards our Selves ought to inſpire us. Thus again, we are not forbidden to be rich; no man is bound to ſtrip himſelf of thoſe Poſſeſſions which he is born to, or to ſhut out that Increaſe which God's Bleſſing and his own Diligence naturally bring in: But we are forbid to *thirſt after Riches*, or to *value* our ſelves upon them, and commanded to be content with thoſe things that we have; and if God bleſs us with Wealth, to enjoy it with Modeſty and Thankfulneſs, and diſpenſe it with Liberality, 1 *Tim.* 6. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. *Godlineſs with contentment is great gain; for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out; and having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a ſnare, and into many fooliſh and hurtful luſts, which drown men in deſtruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil, which while ſome coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themſelves through with many ſorrows.* Ver. 17, 18, 19. *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor truſt in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth*

us all things richly to enjoy. That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate: Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. And to multiply no more Instances of Restraints of this or the like nature, thus we ought to stand affected towards *Praise* and *Reputation*, *Interest* and *Power*, *Beauty*, *Strength*, &c. We must neither be too intent upon them, nor enjoy them with too much Gust and Satisfaction; for this is that Disposition which appears to me to suit best with the Spirit and Design of the Gospel, and with the Nature of such things as being of a middle sort, are equally capable of being either Temptations or Blessings, Instruments of Good or Evil.

3*dly*. The Scripture regulates and bounds our *natural* and *necessary* Appetites, not so much by *nicely* defining the *exact* Degrees and Measures within which Nature must be strictly contained, as by exalted *Examples* of, and *Exhortations* to a *Spiritual*, *Pure*, and *Heavenly* Disposition. Thus our Lord and Master seems to me to give some check to the stream of Natural Affection, and to call off his Disciples from it, to the consideration of a Spiritual Relation; Mark 3. 34, 35. *And he looked round about*

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on them which ſat about him, and ſaid, Behold my mother and my brethren: For whoſoever ſhall do the will of God, the ſame is my brother, and my ſiſter, and mother. To which words of our Lord I may join thoſe of St. *Paul*, *Henceforth know we no man after the fleſh, — yet now henceforth know we him no more*, 2 *Cor.* 5. 16. The Anſwer of our Lord to a Diſciple who would have deferr'd his following him, till he had buried his Father, *Matth.* 8. 21. and to him who begged leave to go and bid farewell firſt to his Relations and Domeſticks, *Luke* 9. 61. does plainly countenance the Doctrine I here advance; and ſo does St. *Paul*, 1 *Cor.* 7. 29. ſo often cited by me. Not that our Saviour or his Apoſtles did ever account our natural Affections *vicious* and *impure*; for 'tis a Vice to be without them, *Rom.* 1. 31. Not that they went about to diminiſh or abate, much leſs to cancel the *Duties* flowing from them: No; They only prune the *Luxuriancy* of *untaught* Nature, and correct the *Fondneſſes* and *Infirmities* of *Animal* Inclinations. Our Natural Affections may entangle and enſlave us, as well as unlawful and irregular ones, if we lay no Reſtraint upon them. Religion indeed makes them the Seeds of Virtue, but without it they eaſily betray us into Sin and Folly. For this reaſon I doubt not, leſt under

under pretence of ſatisfying our moſt Natural and Importunate Appetites, we ſhould be enſnared into the Love of this World, and entangled in the Cares of it, our Saviour forbids us to take thought for to-morrow, even for the *Neceſſaries* of to-morrow, *what we ſhall eat, and what we ſhall drink, and wherewithal we ſhall be cloathed, Matth. 6.* Theſe are the Reſtraints laid upon the Body in Scripture; which if any Man obſerve, he will ſoon diſcern himſelf as far purified and freed from Original Corruption, as Human Nature in this Life is capable of. And that he may;

§. 2*dly*. He muſt fortify and invigorate the Mind. And this muſt be done two ways. Firſt, By poſſeſſing it with the Knowledge of the Goſpel, and the Grace of the Spirit. Secondly, By withdrawing it often from the Body. As to the former Branch of this Rule, the Neceſſity of it is apparent: Since the ſtate of Nature is ſuch as has before been deſcribed, we ſtand in need not only of *Revelation* to *enlighten* us, but alſo of *Grace* to *ſtrengthen* us; of the former to excite us to exert all the Force and Power we have; of the latter to enable us to do that which our Natural Force never can effect. It cannot be here expected that I ſhould treat of the Operation of the

the Spirit, and the Ways of obtaining it, grieving, and quenching it; this would demand a peculiar Treatiſe. I will here only obſerve, That 'tis the Work of the Spirit to *repair* in ſome degree at leaſt, the *Ruins* of the *Fall*; to *rectify Nature*; to *improve* our *Faculties*, and to *imprint* in us the *Divine Image*: That Meditation and Prayer, and a careful Conformity to the Divine Will, obtain and increaſe the Grace of the Spirit: That Negligence and preſumptuous Wickedneſs grieve and extinguiſh it. As to the Knowledge of the Goſpel, I ſhall not need to ſay much here, I have conſidered this matter in the Chapter of Illumination, and will only obſerve, That the Doctrines of the Goſpel are ſuch as if they be thoroughly imbibed, do effectually raiſe us above a ſtate of *Nature*, and ſet us free from the *Power* and *Prevalence* of our Original Corruption. Were we but once perſuaded, That we are Strangers and Pilgrims upon earth: That all Carnal Gratifications do war againſt the Soul: That our Souls are properly our ſelves, and That our firſt Cares are to be for them: That God is himſelf our Sovereign Good, and the Fountain of all inferior Good: That our Perfection and Happineſs conſiſt in the Love and Service of Him: That we have a mighty Mediator, who

who once died for us, and ever lives to make Interceſſion for us: That *a kingdom incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away*, is *reſerved in heaven* for all meek, faithful, and holy Souls: Were we, I ſay, but once thoroughly perſuaded of theſe Truths, with what Vigor would they impregnate our Minds? How clear would be the Convictions of Conſcience? How uncontroulable the Authority of Reaſon? How ſtrong the Inſtincts and Propenſions of the Mind towards Righteouſneſs and Virtue? Theſe would alienate the Mind from the World and the Body, and turn the Bent of it another way; theſe would inſpire it with other Deſires and Hopes, and make it form different Projects from what it had before; *Old things are done away, and all things are become new.* The ſecond Branch of this ſecond particular Rule is, That we muſt accuſtom our ſelves to retire frequently from the Commerce and Converſation of the Body. Whether the eating the forbidden Fruit did open to the Mind new Scenes of Senſuality which it thought not of, and ſo called it down from the Serenity and Heights of a more pure and contemplative Life, to participate the turbulent Pleaſures of Senſe, immerſing it as it were by this means deeper into the Body, I pretend not to judge. But 'tis cer-

certain a too too intimate Conjunction of the Mind with the Body, and the ſatisfactions of it, does very much debaſe it. 'Tis our great unhappineſs, that the Soul is always in the Senſes, and the Senſes are always upon the World; we converſe with the World, we talk of the World, we think of the World, we project for the World; and what can this produce, but a carnal and worldly frame of ſpirit? We muſt meditate Heavenly Things; we muſt have our Converſation in Heaven; we muſt accuſtom our ſelves to inward and Heavenly Pleaſures, if we will have Heavenly Minds: We muſt let no day paſs, wherein we muſt not withdraw our ſelves from the Body, and ſequeſter our ſelves from the World, that we may converſe with God and our own Souls. This will ſoon enable us to diſdain the low and beggarly ſatisfactions of the outward Man, and make us long to be ſet free from the weight of this corruptible Body, to breathe in purer Air, and take our fill of refined and ſpiritual Pleaſure. I have inſiſted thus long on the Cure of Original Sin, not only becauſe it is the *Root* of all our *Miſery*, but alſo becauſe there is ſuch an *Affinity* between this and the Sin of Infirmity, which I am next to ſpeak to, that the ſame Remedies may be preſcribed to both; ſo that I am already eaſed of a part of the

Labour

Labour which I muſt otherwiſe have undergone in the following Chapter.

I am now by the Laws of my own Method obliged to conſider the *Effects* of this Branch of *Chriſtian Liberty* in the *Perfect* Man, and to ſhew what Influence it has upon his Happineſs. But having *Sect.* 1. *Chap.* 4. diſcourſed at large of the ſubſerviency of Perfection to our Happineſs; and in *Sect.* 2. *Chap.* 3. of the happy Effects of Chriſtian Liberty in general, I have the leſs need to ſay much here on this Head: Yet I cannot wholly forbear ſaying ſomething of it. The Conqueſt over Original Corruption, ſuch as I have deſcribed it, raiſes Man to the higheſt pitch of Perfection that our Nature is capable of; makes him approach the neareſt that Mortality can, to the Life of Angels, and plants him on the Mount of God, where Grace, and Joy, and Glory, ſhines always on him with more direct and ſtrong Rays. Now is Virtue *truly Lovely*, and *truly Happy*; now the Aſſurance of the Mind is never interrupted, its Joy never overcaſt; it enjoys a perpetual Calm within, and ſparkles with a peculiar Luſtre that cannot be counterfeited, cannot be equall'd. Some faint and partial Reſemblance, I confeſs, of this Virtue, or rather of this State or Conſummation of it, have I, though very

very rarely, ſeen in ſome maſterly ſtrokes of Nature. I have obſerv'd in ſome that Sweetneſs of Temper, in others that Coldneſs and abſolute Command over themſelves with reſpect to the Pleaſures, and in ſeveral that innate Modeſty and Humility, that natural Indifference for the Power, Honour, and Grandeur of Life, that I could ſcarce forbear pronouncing, That they had ſo far each of them eſcaped the *Contagion* of Original Corruption, and could not but bleſs and love them. But after all, there is a vaſt difference between theſe *Creatures* of *Nature*, and thoſe of *Grace*: The Perfection of the one is confin'd to this or that particular Diſpoſition, but that of the other is in its degree univerſal: The Perfection of the one has indeed as much Charm in it as pure Nature can have; but the other has a mixture of ſomething Divine in it, it has an Heavenly Tincture, which adds ſomething of *Sacredneſs* and *Majeſty* to it, that Nature wants: The Perfection of the one is indeed eaſy to its ſelf, and amiable to others; but the Perfection of the other is Joy and Glory within, and commands a Veneration as well as Love from all it converſes with. Bleſſed State! when ſhall I attain thy lovely Innocence! when ſhall I enter into thy Divine Reſt! when ſhall I arrive at thy Security, thy Pleaſure!

CHAP. V.

Of Liberty, with reſpect to Sins of Infirmity.

THIS is a *Subject*, wherein the very *Being* of Holineſs or Virtue, the *Salvation* of Man, and the *Honour* of God, are deeply intereſſed: For if we allow of ſuch Sins for *Venial*, as really are not ſo, we deſtroy the Notion, or evacuate the Neceſſity of Holineſs; endanger the Salvation of Man, and bring a Reflection upon God as a Favourer of Impiety. On the other hand, if we aſſert thoſe Sins *damnable*, which are not really ſo, we miſerably perplex and diſturb the *Minds* of Men, and are highly injurious to the *Goodneſs* of God; repreſenting Him as a ſevere and intolerable Maſter. But how important ſoever this Subject be, there is no other, I think, in the compaſs of Divinity, wherein ſo many Writers have been ſo unfortunately engaged; ſo that it is over-grown with Diſpute and Controverſy, with Confuſion and Obſcurity, and numberleſs Abſurdities and Contradictions. This I have thought neceſſary to obſerve in the Entrance of my Diſcourſe, not to inſult the Per-

Performances of others, or to raiſe in the Reader any great Expectation for my own; but indeed for a quite contrary reaſon, namely, to diſpoſe him to a favourable Reception of what I here offer towards the rendring the Doctrine of Sins of Infirmity intelligible, and preventing the Diſſervice which Miſtakes about it do to Religion.

By Sins of Infirmity, both *Ancients* and *Moderns*, *Papiſts* and *Proteſtants*, do, I think, underſtand ſuch Sins as are conſiſtent with a State of Grace and Favour; and from which the beſt Men are never intirely freed in this Life, though they be not imputed to them. This then being taken for granted, I ſhall Enquire into theſe Three Things.

1. Whether there be any ſuch Sins, Sins in which the moſt Perfect live and dye.

2. If there are, what theſe be. What it is that diſtinguiſhes them from *Damnable* or *Mortal* ones.

3. How far we are to extend the *Liberty* of the Perfect Man in Relation to *theſe*.

1. Whether there be any ſuch. That the beſt Men are not without Errors, without Defects and Failings, and that not only

in their past Life, or unregenerate State, but their best and most Perfect one, is a Truth which cannot, one would think, be controverted: For what *Understanding* is there which is not liable to *Error*? What *Will* that does not feel something of *Impotence*, something of *Irregularity*? What *Affections*, that are meerly Human, are ever *constant*, ever *raised*? Where is the *Faith* that has no *Scruple*, no *Diffidence*; the *Love* that has no *Defect*, no *Remission*; the *Hope* that has no *Fear* in it? What is the *State* which is not liable to *Ignorance*, *Inadvertency*, *Surprise*, *Infirmity*? Where is the *Obedience* that has no *Reluctancy*, no *Remisness*, no *Deviation*? This is a Truth which, whether Men will or no, they cannot chuse but feel; the Confessions of the Holiest of Men bear Witness to it. And the Pretension of the *Quakers*, to a Sinless and Perfect State, is abundantly confuted by that Answer, one of the most eminent of them, makes to an Objection, which charges them with arrogating and assuming to themselves Infallibility and Perfection, *viz. That they were so far Infallible and Perfect, as they were led by the Spirit of God.* For what is this, but to *desert* and *betray*, not defend their Cause? 'Tis plain then, as to Matter of Fact, that the most *Perfect* upon Earth are not without Frail-

ties and Infirmities; and such Infirmities as discover themselves in actual Slips and Errors. But the Question is, Whether these are to be accounted *Sins?* I must confess, if we strictly follow the Language of the Scripture, we should rather call them by some other Name, for this does so generally understand by Sin, a Deliberate Transgression of the Law of God, that it will be very difficult to produce *many* Texts wherein the Word *Sin* is used in any other sense. As to *Legal* Pollutions, I have not much considered the matter. But as to *Moral* ones, I am in some Degree confident, that the word Sin does generally signify such a Transgression as by the Gospel Covenant is punishable with Death; and *rarely* does it occur in any other sense; I say *rarely*, for, if I be not much mistaken, the Scripture does *sometimes* call those Infirmities I am now talking of, Sins. But what if it did not? 'Tis plain, That every Deviation from the Law of God, if it has any Concurrence of the Will in it, is in strict speaking *Sin*: And 'tis as plain that the Scripture does frequently give us such Descriptions and Characters, and such Names of these Sins of Infirmity, as do oblige us both to strive and watch against them, and repent of them. For it calls them Spots, Errors, Defects, Slips, and

the like. But, what is, Laſtly, moſt to my purpoſe, it is plain, That this Diſtinction of Sins, into Mortal and Venial, or Sins of Infirmity, has its Foundation in expreſs Texts of Scripture. Numerous are the Texts cited to this purpoſe: But he that will deal fairly muſt confeſs, that they are moſt of them improperly and impertinently urged, as relating either to Falls into Temporal Calamity; or to Mortal, not Venial Sins; or to the Sins of an unregenerate State; or to a comparative Impurity, I mean the Impurity of Man with reſpect to God; a Form of Expreſſion frequent in *Job*. I will therefore content my ſelf to cite three or four, which ſeem not liable to theſe Exceptions, Deut. 32. 4. *They have corrupted themſelves; their Spot is not the ſpot of his Children: They are a perverſe and crooked Generation.* Here two things ſeem to be pointed out to us plainly, Firſt, that the Children of God are not without their Spots, Secondly, That theſe are not of the ſame Nature with thoſe of the wicked, in compariſon with whoſe wilful and perverſe Tranſgreſſions, the Children of God are, elſewhere, pronounced blameleſs, without Offence, without Spot, *Pſal.* 19. 12, 13. *Who can underſtand his Errors? cleanſe thou me from ſecret Faults: Keep back alſo thy Servant from preſumptuous Sins,*

Sins, let them not have dominion over me; then ſhall I be upright, and I ſhall be innocent from the great Tranſgreſſion. Here again the *Pſalmiſt* ſeems to me to place Uprightneſs in Freedom from Deliberate or Mortal Sin, and to admit of another ſort of Tranſgreſſions, into which, even upright Men ſlip ſometimes. Nor does the *Pſalmiſt* here only aſſert Venial Sins; but he ſeems to me to ſuggeſt the Springs and Sources of them, namely, ſome ſecret Diſpoſitions in our Nature to Folly and Error, which he prays God to cleanſe and free him from more and more; *Cleanſe thou me from ſecret faults.* The word *Faults* is not in the Original; but ſomething of that kind muſt be ſupplied to render the ſenſe intire in our Language. The words of *Solomon*, *Prov.* 20, 9. ſeem to relate to this Corruption lurking in us, and never utterly to be extirpated; *Who can ſay I have made my Heart clean, I am pure from my Sin?* For if this ſhould be applied to Mortal Sin, every one ſees, that it will contradict a hundred places in Scripture, which attribute to Righteous Men, Purity of Heart, and Deliverance from Sin. Laſtly, *James* 3. 2. we are told plainly, that *in many things we offend all*, πολλὰ γὰρ πταίομεν ἅπαντες, not Sinners only, but Righteous and Upright Men, have their Defects and

Slips. And accordingly there is not any Life which we have the History of in Scripture, how excellent soever the Person be, but we meet with some of these recorded; as will appear from those several Instances I shall produce, when I come to describe the Nature of these Sins. And certainly when *David* says of himself, *My Sins are more in number than the hairs of my head*: He that shall interpret this Place of Mortal or Presumptuous Sins, will both contradict the Scriptures, which acquit him, except in the matter of *Uriah*, and highly wrong the Memory of *David*, making him a Prodigy of Wickedness, instead of a Saint. Nor does *that* make any thing against me, which he adds in the next Words, *My heart fails me*; or *that* in the foregoing Verse, *Mine Iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up.* For I do not affirm that the *Psalmist* here has regard only to Sins of Infirmity exclusively of others; no, he reckons all together, and so discerns the one aggravated by the other; and the Guilt of all together very far enhanced. Nor do I, *Secondly*, interess my self here in that Dispute between Protestants and Papists, Whether Sins of Infirmity are not damnable in their own Nature, though not imputed under the Covenant of Grace? Nor

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do I, Laſtly, examine what a vaſt Heap of Sins of Infirmity may amount to, though the Guilt of this or that alone were not ſo fatal. I have then, I think, proved the matter in Queſtion; having ſhewed, both from the Experience of Mankind, and the Scripture, That the beſt Men have their Infirmities and Defects; And that theſe may properly enough be called Sins. I think it ſuperfluous to prove, that they conſiſt with a ſtate of Salvation; ſince 'tis not by any, that I know of, denied; and may be eaſily enough made out, from what I have already ſaid. I am now to Enquire,

§. 2. What theſe Sins be; and how diſtinguiſh'd from Mortal or Damnable ones. To this purpoſe we may diſtinguiſh Human Actions (under which I comprise both Internal and External) into three ſorts, Voluntary, Involuntary, and Mixt.

§. 1. There are Actions properly and truly Voluntary; ſuch are thoſe deliberate Tranſgreſſions of a Divine Law, which Man commits in Oppoſition to the direct Remonſtrances of Conſcience; he knows the Action is forbid; he ſees the Turpitude and Obliquity of it; he is not ignorant of the puniſhment denounced againſt it, and yet he ventures upon it: This is plainly Mortal, Damnable Sin, and I can-

not

not think, that any Circumſtance or Pretence whatever, can render it Venial. And therefore I muſt be pardoned, if I cannot be of their Opinion, who ſuppoſe, that the ſmalneſs of the Matter, the Reluctancy of Conſcience, or the Length and Force of a Temptation, can ſo ſoften and mitigate a Voluntary Tranſgreſſion, as to diminiſh it into a Sin of Infirmity. 1. As to the ſmalneſs of the Matter. Some cannot but think thoſe Tranſgreſſions Venial, which are, for the Matter of them, ſo ſlight and inſignificant, that they ſeem to be attended by no miſchievous Conſequence, nor to offer any Diſhonour to God, nor Injuſtice to Man. But I doubt this Notion of Venial Sin has no Solidity in it; For either Men perform ſuch Actions Deliberately, or Indeliberately, knowing them to be ſinful, or believing them to be innocent. Now if we perform any Action Deliberately, and knowing it to be ſinful, we never ought to look upon this as a *little* Sin, much leſs a *Venial* one. The Reaſon of this is plain. The Firſt Notion that every Man has of Sin, is, that it is forbidden by, and diſpleaſing to God; and then to do that deliberately, which we know will provoke God, is an Argument of a fearleſs and irreligious Heart, a Heart deſtitute of the Love of God, the Love of Righte-

Righteouſneſs, and Heaven. But if a Man tranſgreſs in a *trifling Inſtance indeliberately*; this alters the caſe; for the Matter not being of Importance enough to excite the Intention and Application of the Mind; and there being conſequently no Malignity of the Will in an Action, where there was no Concurrence of the Judgment, I cannot but think, this may very well paſs for an Human Infirmity; for all the Fault that can be here laid to the Charge of Man is, Incogitancy or Inadvertency; and that too as excuſable a one as can be. Laſtly, where the Matter of an Action is very trifling and inconſiderable, and draws after it no ill Conſequence, either with reſpect to God or Man; in this Caſe, if a Man judge it no Sin, I cannot think it is any to him; though by a Nice and Scrupulous Conſtruction, it may fall within the Compaſs of ſome Divine Prohibition. The Diſtinction of the Schoolmen is good enough here; it is beſides the Law, but not againſt it: Or it is againſt the Letter, but not the Deſign and Intention of the Law of God. I cannot think that it is conſiſtent with the Infinite Goodneſs of God, to puniſh ſuch things as theſe with Eternal Miſery, or that it can become a Man of Senſe, ſeriouſly to afflict his Soul for them. I cannot for my Life perſuade

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my ſelf, that I ſhould provoke God, if paſſing thorough a Field of my Neighbour's Corn or Peaſe, I ſhould pull off an Ear or Cod; or paſſing through his Orchard, ſhould eat an Apple. The Notion I have of God, and the great End and Deſign of his Laws, will not ſuffer me to entertain ſuch trifling, weak, and ſuperſtitious Fancies. And here I cannot but take notice of two Things, which very much perplex the Minds of ſome good People; that is, an Idle *Word*, and *Jeſting*: Concerning both which, 'tis very plain, That ſuch are miſerably miſtaken; and that they are no ſins at all, unleſs unreaſonable and ſuperſtitious Scruples make them ſo: This, I ſay, on ſuppoſition that by Idle word, they mean *only* ſuch Talk, as does not tend to Edification; and by Jeſting, only *that* which is Innocent and Divertive. By an Idle Word (*Mat.* 12.) our Saviour plainly means a blaſphemous Word, if that ſaying of our Saviour, of every *idle Word*, &c. be to be limited and confined by the ſenſe of the Context: For the occaſion of the Aſſertion of our Lord, was the Blaſphemy which the *Jews* belch'd out againſt his Miracles. Or if our Lord here, on this occaſion, advances a general Doctrine, then, by an Idle World, we muſt underſtand a wicked one, proceeding

ceeding from a corrupt and naughty Heart; and tending as directly to promote Impiety, as gracious and wholſome Diſcourſe does to promote Edification. This is evident from *ver.* 25. *A good man, out of the good treaſure of the heart, bringeth forth good things*; and an *evil man, out of the evil treaſure bringeth forth evil things.* And *ver.* 37. *for by thy words thou ſhalt be juſtified, and by thy words thou ſhalt be condemned.* By *Jeſting*, *Eph.* 5. 4. the Apoſtle underſtands the *modiſh Railery* of the *Greeks*, which was generally made up of *Prophaneneſs* and *Wantonneſs*; or brisk and ſharp Ironies. This is plain, both from the Company we find it in ἀισχρότης καὶ μωρολογία, Filthineſs and Fooliſh Speaking; and from the Character given it in common with the other two, Τὰ ἐκ ἀνήκοντα being the very ſame that is given the moſt infamous and vileſt Luſts and Paſſions. *Rom.* 1. 28. *Things not convenient* is a diminutive Expreſſion, implying ſuch things as contain much Turpitude and Wickedneſs in them *Beza*, as appears by his Notes, reads ἢ, not καὶ in this place, fooliſh ſpeaking, *or*, not *and*, Jeſting; which (as he obſerves) makes Jeſting the ſame thing with fooliſh Speaking, or Buffoonry. And juſtifies that Jeſting, which conſiſts in a pleaſant and divertive Facetiouſneſs from

1 *Kings*

1 *Kings* 18. 27. 2 *Kings* 3. 23. *Isa.* 14. 11.

2. Some think, that the meer Reluctancy and Oppoſition of Conſcience againſt Sin, is ſufficient to conſtitute a Sin of Infirmity. And this has received no ſmall Countenance from ſuch an Interpretation of *Rom.* 7. as makes Holineſs to be nothing elſe but a Viciſſitude of Deſires and Actions, repugnant to one another. But at this rate no Man's Sins would be Damning but his whoſe Conſcience were ſear'd; and when ones Heart did condemn one, God would be ſure to acquit one: Which agrees very ill with St. *John*, *If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things*, 1 *Joh.* 3. 21. No Man, unleſs arrived at a Reprobate ſenſe, can do that which is evil, without Reluctancy; for his Conſcience will forbid him, as long as it has the leaſt Degree of Tenderneſs in it; and reſtrain him as far as it has power. And as to *Rom.* 7. it has been abundantly conſider'd; and, I think, ſufficiently proved to belong to thoſe, who are the Servants of ſin; as *Rom.* 8. does to thoſe who are ſet free. St. *Auſtin* indeed tells us, that he underſtood that Chapter at firſt as the *Pelagians* did, for a Perſon under the Law, and under the Power of ſin; But that he found himſelf conſtrained

conſtrained afterwards to underſtand it of St. *Paul* himſelf. I will not examine the Solidity of his Reaſons: 'Tis enough to me, that his Change of Opinion does Religion no harm: For he is ſo far from making a ſtate of Holineſs to conſiſt with Acts of Deliberate Sin againſt Conſcience, that he will not excuſe ſo much as rebellious Motions and Appetites, if conſented to. All that he contends for, in a good man, from this Chapter is, That Lapſed Nature will ſometimes exert it ſelf, even in the beſt men, in diſorderly and diſtemper'd Appetites.

3. Others, Laſtly, will have thoſe ſins, into which we fall, either overpower'd by the Strength, or wearied out by the Aſſiduity or Length of a Temptation, paſs for Infirmities. But this Opinion has as little ground as the two former. I can find no Scripture that countenances this Notion. There are indeed, ſome of great Reputation, who have promoted it. But, I think, the words of St. *Paul* make againſt it, 1 *Cor.* 10. 13. *There hath no temptation taken you, but ſuch as is common to Man; but God is faithful, who will not ſuffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation alſo make a way to eſcape; that ye may be able to bear it.* The Deſign of which words, is certainly to encourage Chriſtians

ſtians againſt the biggeſt Temptations, by an Aſſurance of Relief from God, proportionable to our Neceſſities; and conſequently muſt imply, that if we yield to a Temptation, 'tis our own fault. God expects we ſhould ſtand firm under the higheſt Trials. *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*, Rev. 2. 10. *To him that overcometh will I grant to ſit with me in my Throne, even as I alſo overcame, and am ſet down with my Father in his Throne*, Rev. 3. 21. *But whoſoever ſhall deny me before Men, him will I alſo deny before my Father which is in Heaven*, Mat. 10. 33. If therefore, by Sins of Infirmity, Men mean, ſuch as are conſiſtent with the ſtate of Grace, *i. e.* ſuch as good men may frequently fall into, without forfeiting the Peace of Conſcience, and the Favour of God, I cannot poſſibly think, that any Deliberate Sin can be ſuch, upon the ſcore of the Temptation; or that any of thoſe Sins, reckoned in the Catalogue, *Gal.* 5. and *Eph.* 5. can be ſuch on the account of the Violence or Perſeverance with which they attack us. But, Secondly, If by Sins of Infirmity they mean, ſuch Sins as Righteous men are liable to, I know not what they are from which they are exempted. But if, Laſtly, by Sins of Infirmity, they mean ſuch, for which God

is more easily intreated, then there is no Question to be made, but that there is a Difference in Sins; which is to be estimated by the different Measures of Grace and Knowledge; by the different Degrees of Deliberation and Surprize; and by the Force or Weakness, the Continuance or Shortness of a Temptation: And Finally, by the different Effects and Tendencies of Sins. To all which, I do not question, but that the Spirit has regard in those Directions, which it gives us, for our Behaviour towards such as fall, *Gal.* 6. 1. *Brethren, if a Man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the Spirit of Meekness; considering thy self, lest thou also be tempted. And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire,* Jude 22, 23.

§. 2. A Second sort of Actions are such as we call Involuntary; that is, those, wherein we exercise no Deliberation, no Choice. Some have reduced Sins of Infirmity to this Head, but with what Colour of Reason any one may judge. For since Actions truly *Involuntary*, are neither the Object of the Understanding nor Will, 'tis hard to conceive what Morality there can be in them. The Grounds on which this Opinion is built, are such as these. First,

the Measure, say they, of Good and Evil is the Law of God; but Involuntary and unavoidable Actions are not a proper subject of Laws. For to what purpose is it to prescribe Rules, or to propose Rewards and Punishments to such Actions, as are no way subject to our Choice? Secondly, They tell us, 'tis inconsistent with the Goodness of God, and the Riches of Gospel Grace, to impute those things to a Man as Damnable Sins, which fall not within the Compass of his Power or Deliberation. Now, I must confess, I am so far from denying any Actions, that can lay a just claim to this Apology, to be Venial, that I cannot forbear thinking that they are not sinful: For *where there is no Law there is no Transgression.* But how does this way of arguing for the Excusableness of Involuntary Transgressions, consist with those other Doctrines which they maintain concerning them; namely, That we are bound to Repentance for them; That these Sins are not Venial in their own Nature, but only through the Favour of God? For the Law, taken in its Rigour, denounces Death against all Sin in general, without Limitation or Exception; so that if God should judge rigorously, even Involuntary Sin would fall under that Sentence, *The wages of Sin is Death.* This, I must confess,

ſeems to me very incoherent. For if an Action be of that nature, that it cannot properly be the Matter or Subject of a Law, How can it fall under the Condemnation of Law? If it be of that nature that it is incapable of any Moral Regulation, nor ſubject to the Influence of Reward or Puniſhment, How can it be meer matter of Grace that a Man is not damned for it? In a word, if an Action be truly and properly Involuntary, it can by no means be Sin; And if it be Voluntary, it is ſubject to the Regulation of Laws: 'Tis a proper Inſtance of Deliberation and Freedom, and capable of Rewards and Puniſhments. And the Truth is, the one needs no Apology, and the other is not capable of any; the one is a Mortal Sin, and the other no Sin at all. And therefore, we muſt look for Venial Sin in ſome other Species of Action.

§. 3. The laſt Claſs of Actions are thoſe which are of a mixt Nature; partly Voluntary, and partly Involuntary: And here, I think, we muſt place Sins of Infirmity, by whatever Names we may call them. For theſe ſurely, if they are to be rank'd (as by all they are) amongſt Actual Sins, muſt be ſuch Actions as have in them, ſomething of Voluntary, ſome-

thing of Involuntary, much of Human Frailty, and ſomething of Sinful; much of Unavoidable, and ſomething of Moral Obliquity. Theſe are the Tranſgreſſions which the Scripture ſeems to me, to intend by Errors, Defects, Slips, Motes, the Spots of God's Children; and theſe certainly, if any, muſt be the ſins that can conſiſt with a ſtate of Grace. For theſe do not imply a Deliberate Wickedneſs in the Will, much leſs an Habitual one; nay, they do not include in them any *Wickedneſs* at all, ſtrictly ſpeaking, but are truly the Effects of Human Frailty, and the unhappy Circumſtances of this Mortal Life. Thus then I deſcribe a Venial Sin; it has in it ſo much of Voluntary as to make it Sin, ſo much of Involuntary as to make it Frailty; it has ſo much of the Will in it, that it is capable of being reduced; and yet ſo much of Neceſſity in it, it is never utterly to be extirpated: It has ſomething in it Criminal enough to oblige us to watch againſt it, and repent of it; and yet ſo much in it pitiable and excuſable, as to entitle us to Pardon under the Covenant of Grace. And thus I diſtinguiſh Venial from Mortal Sin: Mortal Sin proceeds from a Heart, either Habitually corrupted, or deceived and captivated for the time; but Venial Sin reſults from the Imperfecti-

ons and Infelicities of our Nature, and our State. Mortal Sin is truly Voluntary and Deliberate in the Riſe and Birth of it, and miſchievous and injurious in its Conſequence: But Venial Sin is very far Indeliberate in its Beginning, and, if not indulged, almoſt harmleſs in its Effects: Deficiency is, as it were, the Eſſence of the one, Malignity of the other; in the one we ſee more of Frailty, in the other more of Wickedneſs: In the one ſomething nearly alli'd to Neceſſity, in the other to Preſumption: The one is the Tranſgreſſion of the Law of Perfection, the other of the Law of Sincerity; the one is repugnant to the Letter, the other to the Deſign and End of the Law; the one is a Violation of God's Commands, taken in the moſt favourable Conſtruction; the other a Violation of them in a rigorous one. That this was the Notion of *St. Auſtin*, *St. Jerome*, and others, who impugn'd the ſinleſs Perfection of the *Pelagians*, is very plain. 1. From the Diſtinction they made between Κακια and ἁμαρτημα, *Crimen* and *Peccatum*, i. e. between Wickedneſs and Defects, between Crimes and Faults; for this is plainly the ſenſe wherein they uſed thoſe words. And next from thoſe very clear and lively Deſcriptions of Venial Sin, which occur frequently in St. *Auſtin*;

after whom, 'tis well known, others writ. Such is that * *through Ignorance or Infirmity, for want of exerting our utmoſt ſtrength againſt Concupiſcence, we are drawn away by it to ſome unlawful things; and the worſe we are, ſo much the more and the oftner; but the better we are, ſo much the leſs and the ſeldomer do we give way to it,* And thus † St. *Jerome* imputes Venial Sin, to our not making uſe of our utmoſt Strength and Diligence. I might content my ſelf with having given this general Deſcription of Sins of Infirmity, did I not know, how ill a Talent ſome have at Application of Generals to any particular Caſe; and how little ſatisfactory ſuch Account is to the weak and ſcrupulous. For the ſake of theſe therefore, I think fit to be a little more diſtinct and particular on this Argument. In Venial Sin then, Two Things muſt be conſidered.

* —— *Fit ut per Ignorantiam vel Infirmitatem non exertis adverſus eam totis viribus voluntatis, eidem ad illicita etiam nonnulla cedamus, tanto magis & crebrius quanto deteriores, tanto minus & rarius quanto meliores ſumus.* Tom. 7. *De* Peccat. Rem. p. 689.

† *Hoc & nos dicimus, poſſe Hominem non peccare, ſi velit, pro tempore, pro loco, pro imbecillitate corporea, quamdiu intentus eſt Animus, quamdiu chorda nullo vitio laxatur in* Cithera. *Dial.* 3. *adv. Pelag.* p. 201.

1. The Matter of it.
2. The manner of Committing it.

1. As to the Matter, I conceive it ought to be *ſlight* and *inconſiderable*. There is

is no room for a Venial Sin in things of a crying provoking Nature; as in Adultery, Idolatry, Murther; for in these, the Injustice and Wickedness, with respect to God and Man, is palpable and formidable; and can never, for ought I see, be extenuated by any Circumstances into Sins of Infirmity. But when I say, the Matter of the Sin of Infirmity, must not be a detestable and crying Provocation, I do not mean to extend this to the first *Tendencies* and *Dispositions* even towards such sins. Thus though Adultery cannot be a Venial Sin, yet the first Sallies of the Desire, the first Glances and Wandrings of the Eye, may. And the same thing may be said of the first Motions towards any other sin.

2. As to the next thing to be considered in a Venial Sin, that is, the *manner* of committing it, it must proceed from *Ignorance*, *Frailty*, or *Surprise*.

1. From *Ignorance*. By Ignorance I do not mean that which is utterly *invincible*, but that which has some *Defect*, some *Frailty*, some *Degree* of *Negligence* in it. Of this kind, I take those Errors to be, against which *David* prays, *Psalm* 19. 12. *Who can understand his Errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.* He that considers Human Nature, and the Power of Education, the Influence of Prejudices, which

we ſuck in betimes, and ſuch like, will eaſily acknowledge, that there may be ſuch Errors. When we have uſed a *moral Diligence* in examining our Lives, and trying our own Hearts; yet conſidering the vaſt Variety of Duties we are to run through, no Humble Man can be confident, that he has omitted nothing, that he is miſtaken in nothing. This I take to be the ſenſe of *Solomon*, *Prov.* 20. 9. *Who can ſay, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my ſin?* And this I take to be the ſenſe of St. *Paul*, 1 *Cor.* 4. 4. *For I know nothing by my ſelf, yet am I not hereby juſtified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.* There are Miſtakes and Errors, which might indeed have been prevented or removed, by the *ſtricteſt* Impartiality, and the *ſtricteſt* Diligence. But alas! How often do Good men fall ſhort of both theſe? How common is it for Good men to be too far tranſported by the beſt of Principles, even Zeal? How often do Good men mix their Errors in Reproof and Reprehenſion, and in the one and the other, they diſcern it not?

2. *Surpriſe* and *Inadvertency* is another thing that renders Sin *Venial*. The Multitude of Affairs and Temptations, the Suddenneſs and Unexpectedneſs of ſome unuſual Temptation, or ſomething of this kind, may betray a Good man into ſome

Slips or Errors, in Word or Deed. This I take to be the Case of *Sarah*, when she said, *I laughed not*: Of *Jonah*, when he replied upon God, *I do well to be angry*, Jon. 3. Of *David*, when he pronounced rashly, *do thou and Zibah divide the land*, 2 *Sam.* 16. 4. Of *Saul* and *Barnabas*, when they broke out into Heat and Anger. But that which was a Sin of *Infirmity* in the beginning, became, I doubt, a *Deliberate* one in the end, when they parted from one another. Some extend this Circumstance of Surprise to excuse Sins, which imply notorious Wickedness, and are of very ill Consequence; but, I think, very erroneously. 'Tis true, these Sins of Surprise, whatever the matter of them be, are generally conceived to be much extenuated through want of Opportunity to summon our strength, and to make use of mature and sober Deliberation; especially where the Temptation is not *only sudden*, but *violent* too. For in this case, the Soldier of Christ, taken, as it were, in an Ambush, or blown up with a Mine, seems to be lost and defeated before he discern his Danger: I do not doubt then, but this suddenness of a Temptation does very much diminish the Guilt of a Sin. But we ought remember too, that there are many things that do abate and take off

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from this Excuſe: As Firſt, It is not eaſy to conceive how any thing that is a direct Wickedneſs, that is a Sin of a deeper Die than ordinary, on the account of its miſchievous Conſequences, ſhould make its Approach ſo ſilently, and ſo ſuddenly, that we ſhould fall into it indiſcernibly. Secondly, The Chriſtian is bound to ſhun not only every Evil, but every *Appearance* of it; and 'tis hard to imagine, that a ſincere man, who does indeed ſtrain at a *Gnat*, ſhould ſwallow a *Camel*. He that preſerves the Tenderneſs of Conſcience, as he will have an *Averſion* for *ſmall Sins*, ſo will he have an *Horror* for *great ones*. Thirdly, The Mind of a Chriſtian ought to be poſſeſſed and awed by the Fear of God; and *that* not a ſlight and tranſient, but a deep and laſting one. The *Pſalmiſt* was not content to ſay, *I am afraid of thy Judgments*; but to expreſs how thoroughly this Fear had ſeized him, he adds, *my fleſh trembleth for fear of thee*, Pſalm 119. And certainly, this Fear is a ſort of impenetrable Armour, which extinguiſhes all the fiery Darts of the Devil. In vain is the ſuddenneſs, or the briskneſs of a Temptation, unleſs we firſt lay aſide this Shield. Fourthly, We are bound to be always on our Watch and Guard; and therefore if we relax our Diſcipline, if we live ſecure

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and careleſs, if we raſhly caſt our ſelves upon Dangers, our Sin then will be but the Conſequence of our Folly; and therefore one Error cannot be an Excuſe or an Apology for another. I think therefore, the Apology of Surpriſe ſhould be confin'd and limited to *ſlight* Offences; it cannot properly have room in *great* ones, or if it have, it may be urged in *Mitigation* of our Puniſhment; but never, I doubt, for *total Impunity.*

3. Laſtly, Venial Sin has its Riſe from the Defects and Imperfections of our *Nature*, and the diſadvantageous Circumſtanſtances of our *State.* Here come in the Failures and Defects in the *Meaſures* and *Degrees* of Duty; if theſe can be properly reckon'd for Sins: I ſay, if they can; for I do not ſee that this is a good Argument: We are bound to the higheſt Degree of Love by that Law, *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart*; therefore whatſoever falls ſhort of the higheſt and moſt abſolute Degree of Love, is a Sin: For at this rate, whatever were ſhort of Perfection, would be Sin. We muſt love nothing better than God, nothing equal to Him: This will conſtitute us in a ſtate of Sincerity. What is further required is, that we are bound to *aim* at, and *purſue* after the higheſt and moſt perfect Degrees of Love;

Love; but we are not bound under Pain of *Damnation* to *attain* them. But on the other hand, I readily grant, that our falling ſhort in the Degrees of Faith, Love, Hope, and the like, may be properly reckoned amongſt Sins; when they ſpring from Defects of Vigilance and Induſtry: And if theſe Defects be ſuch as can conſiſt with Sincerity, then are the Imperfections or the Abatements of our Virtues, pardonable; and then only. Here again fall in *Omiſſions*, *wandring Thoughts*, *Dulneſs* and *Heavineſs* in Duty, the ſhort *Titillations* of ſome *irregular Fancies*, *Forgetfulneſs*, ſlight and ſhort *Fits* of *Envy*, *Diſcontent*, *Anger*, *Ambition*, *Gaiety* of Mind. Thus we find the Diſciples falling aſleep when they ſhould have pray'd, *Mat.* 26. and *David* praying, *quicken thou me*, *Pſal.* 119. Thus his Soul too was often caſt down, and diſquieted within him, *Pſal.* 42. 2 *Chron.* 30. 18, 19. *Job* curſed the Day of his Birth. In ſhort, our Natures are *Human*, not *Angelical*; and our ſtate is full of Variety of Accidents, that they are too apt to diſcompoſe the Mind, and divert it from its great End. The Ebbs and Flows of Blood and Spirits, and an unlucky Conſtitution, or a Diſtemper; the Multitude or Confuſion of Affairs; the Violence or the Length of Trials; the Eaſe and Flat-

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tery of Prosperity; the Weariness of the Body, or of the Mind; the Incommodiousness of Fortune, Roughness of Conversation; these, and a thousand other things, are apt to produce Defects and Failures in our Obedience, short Disorders in our Affections; and such Emotions and Eruptions as abundantly prove the best to be but Men; and the highest Perfection, if it be but Human, to be wanting and defective. I think I have now omitted nothing necessary to form a true Notion of the Sin of Infirmity. My next business therefore is, to consider,

§. 3. How far the *Liberty* of the Perfect Man, in respect of *Venial Sin*, ought to be extended. There is great Affinity between Venial and Original Sin; and therefore the Perfect Man's Liberty, as it relates to the one and the other, consists in much the same Degrees, and is to be attain'd by the same Method; so that I might well enough dismiss this Subject, and pass on to Mortal Sin. But reflecting on the Nature of Man, how prone we are to Sin, and yet how apt we are to think well of our selves, I judge it necessary to guard the Doctrine of Venial Sin by some few Rules, which may at once serve to secure our Sincerity, and point out the Perfection we are

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to aſpire to. 1ſt. then, If we would prevent any fatal event of Sins flowing from *Ignorance*, we muſt take care, that our Ignorance it ſelf be not *Criminal*; and that it will not be, if our Hearts be ſincerely diſpoſed to do our Duty, and if we uſe moral Diligence to know it: If we be impartial, humble, and honeſt, and have that Concern for the Knowledge and Practice of our Duty, that is in ſome ſort proportionable to the Importance of it. The Ignorance that ariſes from natural Incapacity, or want of ſufficient Revelation, is *invincible*; and therefore *innocent*. John 9. 41. *Jeſus ſaid unto them, If ye were blind, ye ſhould have no ſin; but now ye ſay, we ſee; therefore your ſin remaineth*: And 15. 22. *If I had not come and ſpoken unto them, they had not had ſin: but now they have no cloke for their ſins.* This Rule muſt be underſtood of *neceſſary* Knowledge in General; and more *legible* and *conſpicuous* Lines of Duty: Both which, notwithſtanding there may be room for Sins of Infirmity to enter, where Mortal ones cannot: There may be imperfect Diſpoſitions of Mind, and latent Prejudices; there may be Inſtances of Duty of a ſlighter moment; there may be ſeveral Circumſtances, and ſmall Emergencies that may either be without the Aim, or eſcape the Diſcovery of a moral ſearch, that

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is, of a Human one; which, though it be without *Hypocrisy*, is yet not without more or less *Frailty*. As to Perfection, it differs in this, as it does in other Cases, from Sincerity only in the Degrees by which it is advanced above it. He that will be Perfect, must search for Wisdom as for hid Treasures: His Delight must be in the Law of the Lord, and in his Law must he meditate day and night: His Thirst of Truth must be more eager and impatient, his Diligence more wakeful, more circumspect, more particular, more steady and constant than that of the Beginner; or of one who is no farther advanced, than such Measures of Faith and Love, as are indispensably necessary to Sincerity, will carry him. 2dly, Sins that are occasion'd by *Surprise* and *Inadvertency* will not prove destructive, if the *Inadvertency* it self be in a manner *innocent*: That is, First, There is no room for Inadvertency in compleat Acts of crying Sins. Secondly, There is no pretence for Inadvertency, if we had any Misgivings within, or Warnings without concerning that particular Sin, into which we fell afterwards; much less if we cherish ill Motions till they grow too strong for us. And last of all, if we repeat the same Sin frequently and contemptuously. And to this I may add, he

cannot

cannot be ſaid to Sin through Surpriſe, who throws himſelf into the Way of Temptation, even though he be conſcious of his own Infirmity. 3dly, As to thoſe Moral Defects which flow from *natural Infirmity*, they will not deſtroy us; if the Infirmity it ſelf be pardonable. There are Infirmities which we acquire; Infirmities which grow ſtronger by Indulgence; Infirmities which continue meerly becauſe we do not take Pains to ſubdue them: Our Moral Defects muſt not flow from theſe kinds of Infirmities; but from ſuch, as conſidering Human Nature, and the ſtate of this World, 'tis impoſſible utterly to root out. Theſe Moral Defects will do us no harm; if, Firſt, We take Care to ſettle in our Minds the Habits of thoſe Virtues that are directly oppoſite to them. Secondly, If we watch and fight againſt our natural Infirmities; and endeavour to reduce our Appetites, even our natural Appetites, within ſtrict and narrow Bounds. Thirdly, If we waſh off the Stains of our Slips and Defects by a general Repentance: For upon the Notion I have here given of Venial Sin, Repentance appears to be very neceſſary: For I require in them ſomething of Voluntary, ſomething of Freedom; enough to make an Action ſinful, though not to prove the

Heart

Heart corrupt or wicked. And because the degrees of Voluntary and Involuntary are not so easily distinguishable from one another, 'tis plain our best security against any ill Consequence of our Defects and Frailties, is a Godly Sorrow. And therefore I wonder not if *David* charge himself more severely than God does, *My sins are more in number than the hairs of my head.* *This* was a Confession that became the Humility and Solicitude of a Penitent; that became the Reflections of a Wise and Perfect Man, and the Corruption of Human Nature; the Alloy of Human Performances; the Slips and Defects, the Interruptions, Neglects, and Deviations of the best Life.

CHAP. VI.

Of Liberty, as it imports Freedom or Deliverance from Mortal Sin.

HERE I will Enquire into Three Things;

1. What Mortal Sin is; or what kind of Sins they be, which are on all hands acknowledged to be inconsistent with a state of Grace and Favour.

2. How far the Perfect Man muſt be ſet free or deliver'd from this kind of Sins; or how remote he is from the Guilt of them.

3. Which way this Liberty may be beſt attained.

§. 1. The Firſt Thing neceſſary is, To ſtate the Notion of that Sin, which paſſes under the Name of *Mortal, Wilful, Preſumptuous*, or *Deliberate* Sin: For theſe in Writers are equivalent Terms, and promiſcuouſly uſed to ſignify one and the ſame thing. *Sin* (ſaith St. *John*, 1 *Ep.* 3. 4.) *is the tranſgreſſion of the law.* This is a plain and full Definition too of Sin; For the Law of God is the Rule of Moral Actions; 'tis the Standard and Meaſure of Right and Wrong, of Moral Good and Evil. Whatever is not within the Compaſs of the Law, is not within the Compaſs of Morality neither: Whatever cannot be comprehended within this Definition, cannot have in it the entire and compleat Notion of Sin; or, which is all one, it cannot be Sin, in a ſtrict, proper, and adequate ſenſe of the word. Hence St. *John* in the ſame Verſe tells us, That *whoſoever ſinneth, tranſgreſſeth the law.* And St. *Paul*, Rom. 4. 15. *Where there is no law, there is no tranſgreſſion.* Sin then muſt always ſuppoſe

poſe a Law; without which there can be neither Vice nor Virtue, Righteouſneſs nor Wickedneſs: For theſe are nothing elſe but the Violation or Obſervation of the Law of God; or Habits and States reſulting from the one or the other. But this is not all: Two things more muſt be remark'd, to render this Definition which the Apoſtle gives us of Sin, clear and full. First, The Law muſt be *ſufficiently reveal'd.* Secondly, The Tranſgreſſion of it muſt be truly *Voluntary.*

1. By ſufficient Revelation of a Divine Law, every one underſtands, That the Law muſt be ſo publiſh'd to the Man who is to be govern'd by it, that the *Authority* and *Senſe* of it may be, if it be not his own fault, render'd evident to him. If the Divine Authority of any Rule or Precept be doubtful and uncertain, the Obligation of it will be ſo too: And it is as neceſſary that the Senſe of the Law ſhould be evident, as its Authority. The Law that is penn'd in dark and ambiguous Terms, is, properly ſpeaking, no Law at all; ſince the Mind of the Lawgiver is not ſufficiently made known by it. Whatever is neceſſarily to be forborn or done by us, muſt be fully and clearly preſcribed in the Law of God; and if it be not, it can never be neceſſary. Men through Weakneſs or Deſign

may enact Laws that are but a heap of Letters, a Crowd of dubious Delphick Sentences: But God can never do so, because this is repugnant both to his Wisdom and Goodness, and to the very End of a Law too, which is to be a Rule, not a Snare; 'tis *to give understanding to the simple*; to be *a light to our feet, and a lamp to our paths*; not like an *Ignis Fatuus*, to betray us into Brakes, and Precipices, and Ruin, and Death.

2. The Transgression must be a *Voluntary* one. And this imports two things: 1. A Knowledge of the Law. 2. A Consent to the Breach of it. First, As to the Knowledge of the Law. All that I have to say here in few words, is, That Ignorance of the Law excuses a Transgression, when it is it self excusable; but if the Ignorance it self be Criminal, the effect of it must be so too. We must never think of excusing our Sins, by alledging an Ignorance into which, not our own Incapacity, or any other reasonable Cause, but Neglect or Contempt of the Truth, or some other vicious Lust or Passion has betray'd us. Secondly, As to the Consent of the Will. This is necessary to demonstrate any Action sinful or virtuous; without this the Mind will be no Partner in the Sin, and by consequence cannot be involved in the

Guilt

Guilt of it. Whatever we cannot help, is our Misfortune, not our Fault; Actions merely natural, or merely forc'd, can neither be good nor evil. The concurrence of Reaſon and Choice is indiſpenſably neceſſary to the Morality of an Action. All this is plainly taught us by St. *James* 1. 14, 15. *But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own luſt, and enticed. Then when luſt hath conceived, it bringeth forth ſin; and ſin when it is finiſhed, bringeth forth death.* Which words do certainly imply, That the Spring and Principle of Sin is within our ſelves; That 'tis our natural Corruption that entices and allures us; and 'tis our Conſent to its Enticements that gives Being to Sin, and defiles us with Guilt.

From all this now put together, 'tis eaſy to conclude what ſort of a Deſcription we are to form of *Mortal Sin*: 'Tis ſuch a Tranſgreſſion of the Law of God, as is *vicious* in its *Original*, *deliberate* in its *Commiſſion*, and *miſchievous* in its *Tendencies* or *Effects*: The Heart is corrupted and miſled by ſome Luſt or other, and ſo conſents to the Breach of the Moral Law of God, a Law of Eternal and Immutable Goodneſs: Or if the Sin conſiſts in the Breach of any Poſitive Law, it muſt yet imply in it ſome moral Obliquity in the Will, or in

the Tendency of the Action, or both. So that Preſumptuous, or Mortal Sin, call it by what name we will, is a *Deliberate* Tranſgreſſion of a *known* Law of God, tending to the *Diſhonour* of *God*, the *Injury* of our *Neighbour*, or the *Depravation* of our *Nature*. Such are thoſe Sins which the Prophet *Iſaiah* exhorts thoſe who will repent, to ceaſe from. And ſuch are thoſe we have a Catalogue of, *Eph.* 5. *Gal.* 5. and elſewhere: *Now the works of the fleſh are manifeſt, which are theſe, adultery, fornication, uncleanneſs, laſciviouſneſs, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, ſtrife, ſeditions, hereſies, envyings, murders, drunkenneſs, revellings, and ſuch like.* Theſe are the Sins, of which, as of ſo many Members, the Body of Sin conſiſts: Theſe conſtitute the Old Man: Theſe are ſometimes called, *the filthineſs of the fleſh and ſpirit, ungodlineſs, wickedneſs, iniquity, the luſts of the fleſh, worldly luſts*, and ſuch like. Theſe and the like Sins have, as I ſaid, in them very apparent Symptoms of Malignity and Mortality: They are always the effect of ſome carnal and worldly Luſts, prevailing over the Law of the Mind; and they imply a Contempt of God, Injuſtice to our Neighbour, and ſome kind of Defilement and Pollution of our Nature. And that theſe are the plain In-

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dications of such a Guilt as excludes a Man from Heaven and the Favour of God, is very plain from the Account which the Scripture gives us both of the Origine and Influence of Sin; from the Care it takes to fortify the Heart against all Infection; from the constant Representations it makes us of the Shamefulness and the Mischief of Sin, even in reference to this world as well as the other. I cannot see any thing further necessary to the Explication of deliberate or Presumptuous Sin, unless it be here fit to add, That it is Mortal, though it proceed no further than the Heart: There is no need at all that it should be brought forth into Action, to render it Fatal and Damnable. This is evident, not only from the Nature of Divine Worship, which must be entire, sincere, and spiritual, and therefore can no more be reconciled to the Wickedness of our Hearts, than of our Actions; but also from the express words of our Saviour, *Out of the heart proceed fornication, adultery, theft*, &c. And elsewhere he pronounces the Adultery of the *Heart Damnable*, as well as that of the *Body*, Mat. 5. 28. *But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery already with her in his heart.*

§ 2. I am next to give ſome account of the Liberty of the Perfect Man, in reference to the Sin I have been diſcourſing of. I ſhall not need to ſtop at any General or Preliminary Obſervations; as, That Abſtinence from Sin regards all the Commandments of God alike; and to do otherwiſe were to mutilate and maim Religion, and to diſhonour God while we pretend to worſhip and obey Him: For the Breach of any ſingle Commandment is a manifeſt Violation of the Majeſty and Authority of God; whatever Obſervance we may pay all the reſt: *For he that ſaid, Do not commit adultery, ſaid alſo, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou are become a tranſgreſſor of the law*, Jam. 2. 11. That the Reſtraints Man is to lay upon himſelf, relate no leſs to the *Luſts* of the *Soul*, than the *Actions* of the *Body*: *Except your righteouſneſs exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, you ſhall by no means enter into the kingdom of heaven*, *Matth.* 5. 10. That to begin well will avail us little, unleſs we finiſh well too. Univerſality, Sincerity, and Perſeverance, are generally acknowledged to be eſſential and indiſpenſable Properties of Saving, Juſtifying Faith. Theſe things therefore being but juſt mentioned, I proceed to the Point to be enquired into and reſolved.

I. To

1. To be free from the *Dominion* and *Power* of Mortal Sin, is the firſt and loweſt ſtep; this is indiſpenſable to Sincerity, and, abſolutely neceſſary to Salvation: *Let not ſin reign in your mortal bodies, to fulfil the luſts thereof*, Rom. 6. 12. And the advancing thus far, does, I acknowledge, conſtitute Man in a ſtate of Grace: For in Scripture Men are denominated righteous or wicked, not from ſingle Acts of Vice or Virtue, but from the Prevalence and Dominion, from the Habit or Cuſtom of the one or the other: *Know ye not, that to whom ye yield your ſelves ſervants to obey, his ſervants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of ſin unto death, or of obedience unto righteouſneſs?* Rom. 6. 16. But then I muſt here add two Remarks, by way of Caution. 1. We muſt not preſume too ſoon of Victory over an Habitual Sin. An evil Habit is not ſoon broken off; nor is it an eaſy matter to reſolve, when we have ſet our ſelves free from the Power of it. Sometimes the Temptation does not preſent it ſelf as often as it was wont, or not with the ſame Advantages; ſometimes one Vice reſtrains us from another; ſometimes worldly Conſiderations, or ſome little Change in our Temper, without any thorough Change in our Minds, puts us out of humour for a little while with a darling

ling Sin; and ſometimes the Force and Clearneſs of Conviction, produces ſome pious Fits, which though they do not utterly vanquiſh a Luſt, do yet force it to give way, and retreat for a while, and *interrupt* that Love which they do not *extinguiſh*: All this may be, and the work not yet be done, nor our Liberty yet gain'd. If therefore we fall, though but now and then, and though at ſome diſtance of time, into the ſame Sin, we have great reaſon to be jealous of its Power and our Safety: Nay, though we reſtrain our ſelves from the outward Commiſſion of it; if yet we feel a ſtrong Propenſion to it; if we diſcern our ſelves ready to take fire on the appearance of a Temptation; if we are fond of approaching as near it as we can, and are pleas'd with thoſe Indulgences which are very near a-kin to it, we have reaſon to doubt that our Conqueſt is not yet entire. Nay, the truth is, we cannot be on good grounds aſſured that we are Maſters of our ſelves, till we have a ſettled Averſion for the Sin which before we doted on; and ſhun the Occaſions which before we courted, till we be poſſeſs'd of a Habit of that Virtue which is a direct Contradiction to it; and take as much pleaſure in the Obedience, as ever we did in the Tranſgreſſion of a Divine Command.

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2ly. There are ſome Sins of that provoking Nature, ſo criminal in their Birth, and miſchievous in their Conſequences, That one ſingle *Act* or *Commiſſion* of one of theſe, is equivalent to a *Habit* of others; Such is Murther, Idolatry, Perjury, Adultery; theſe cannot be committed without renouncing *Humanity* as well as *Chriſtianity*; without reſiſting the Inſtincts and Impulſes of Nature, as well as the Light of the Goſpel, and the Grace of the Spirit. We muſt break through a great many Difficulties and Terrors, e're we can come at theſe Sins; we muſt commit *many* other, in order to commit one of theſe; we muſt deliberate long, reſolve deſperately, and in Defiance of God and Conſcience; and what is the *Effect* of Habit in other Inſtances, is a neceſſary *Preparative* in theſe, that is, *Obduration*. In this Caſe therefore, the unhapyy Man, that has been guilty of any one of theſe, muſt not look upon himſelf as ſet free, when he is come to a Reſolution of never repeating it again; But then when he loaths and abhors himſelf in Duſt and Aſhes; when he has made the utmoſt Reparation of the Wrong he is capable of: When, if the Intereſt of Virtue require it, he is content to be oppreſs'd with Shame and Sufferings: When, in one word, a long and conſtant Courſe of Mor-

Mortification, Prayers, Tears and good Works have waſhed off the Stain and Guilt.

2. We muſt be free, not only from a *Habit*, but from ſingle *Acts* of deliberate preſumptuous Sin. The Reaſon is plain; Mortal Sin cannot be committed without wounding the Conſcience, grieving the Spirit, and renouncing our Hopes in God through Chriſt, for the time at leaſt. *The wages of Sin is Death*, is true, not only of Habits, but ſingle Acts of Deliberate Sin. Death is the Penalty, the Sanction of every Commandment; and the Commandment does not prohibit Habits only, but ſingle Acts too. Nor is there indeed any room for Doubt or Diſpute here, but in one Caſe; which is, If a Righteous Man ſhould be taken off in the very Commiſſion of a Sin, which he was fallen into. Here indeed, much may be ſaid, and with much Uncertainty. But the Reſolution of this Point, does not, as far as I can ſee, miniſter to any good or neceſſary End; and therefore I will leave it to God. In all other Caſes, every thing is clear and plain; For if the Servant of God fall into a Preſumptuous Sin, 'tis univerſally acknowledg'd, that he cannot recover his Station but by Repentance. If he repent preſently, he is ſafe; but if he continue in his Sin, if he repeat it, he paſſes into a ſtate of

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Wickedneſs; widens the Breach between God and his Soul; declines inſenſibly into a Habit of ſin, and renders his Wound more, and more incurable. 'Tis to little purpoſe, I think here, to conſider the vaſt Difference there is in the Commiſſion, even of the ſame ſin, between a Child of God, and a Child of Wrath; becauſe a Child of God muſt not commit it at all: If he do, though it be with Reluctancy, though it be, as it were, with an imperfect Conſent, and with a divided Soul; though the Awe of Religion and Conſcience ſeems not utterly to have forſaken him, even in the midſt of his ſin; though his Heart ſmite him, the very Minute it is finiſhed, and Repentance and Remorſe take off the Reliſh of the unhappy Draught; yet ſtill 'tis ſin; 'tis in its Nature Damnable: And nothing but the Blood of Jeſus can purge the Guilt.

3. The Perfect Man may be ſuppoſed, not only actually to abſtain from Mortal ſin, but to be advanced ſo far in the Mortification of all his inordinate Affections, as to do it with *Eaſe* and *Pleaſure*, with *Conſtancy* and *Delight*. For it muſt reaſonably be preſumed, that his Victory over ungodly and worldly Luſt, is more confirm'd and abſolute; his Abhorrence of them more deep and ſenſible, more fixt and laſting

lasting than that of a Beginner or Babe in Christ. The Regenerate at first fears the Consequence of Sin; but by Degrees he hates the Sin it self. The Purity of his Soul renders him now incapable of finding any pleasure in what he doted on before; and the Love of God and Virtue raiseth him above the Temptations which he was wont to fall by: *Old things are past away, and all things are become new.*

4. Lastly, The Perfect Man's Abstinence is not only more *easy* and *steady*, but more *intire* and *compleat* also, than that of others: He has a regard to the End and Design of the Law; to the Perfection of his Nature; to the Purity and Elevation of his Soul; and therefore he expounds the Prohibitions of the Law in the most enlarg'd sense, and interprets them by a Spirit of Faith and Love. He is not content to refrain from Actions directly criminal, but shuns every Appearance of Evil; and labours to mortify all the Dispositions and Tendencies of his Nature towards it; and to decline whatever Circumstances of Life are apt to betray the Soul into a Love of this World, or the Body: He has crucified the World and the Body too. That Pleasure, that Honour, that Power, that Profit, which captives the Sinner, tempts, and tries, and disquiets the Novice, is but a burthen, a trouble to him: He finds no

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Guſt, no reliſh in theſe things. He is ſo far from Intemperance, ſo far from Wantonneſs, ſo far from Pride and Vanity, that could he without any Diſadvantage to the Intereſt of Religion, he would imitate the Meanneſs, the Plainneſs, the Laborioufneſs, the Self-denial of our Saviour's Life; not only in Diſpoſition and Affection of his Soul, but even in his outward State and Deportment; and would prefer it far above the Pomp and Shew of Life. In one word, he enquires not how far he may *Enjoy* and be *Safe*, but how far he may *deny* himſelf and be *wiſe*: He is ſo far from deſiring forbidden Satisfactions, that he is unwilling and afraid to find too much ſatisfaction in the natural and neceſſary Actions of an animal Life. I need not prove this to any one who has read the foregoing Chapters: For it is what I have been doing throughout this Treatiſe. It is nothing but what is conſonant to the whole Tenour of the Scripture; and to the Example of the beſt Times. And 'tis conformable to what the beſt Authors have writ, who have any thing of Life and Spirit in their Works: Or have any true Notion of the great Deſign of Chriſtian Religion, which is, an Heavenly Converſation. Let any one but caſt his Eye on St. *Baſil*, or any other after him, who aim'd at the ſame thing I now do,

do, the promoting Holiness in the World in the Beauty and Perfection of it, and he will acknowledge, that I am far from having carried this matter too high. I will quote but one or two Passages of St. *Basil*; (a) His Description of the Perfect Man with regard to his Self-denial runs thus. He is one that consults the *Necessities*, not the *Pleasure* of his Nature; and seems to grudge the Time which he bestows on the Support and Nourishment of a corruptible Body. He is so far from looking upon eating and drinking, *&c.* as an Enjoyment, that he rather accounts it a Task or troublesome Service which the Frailty of his Nature demands at his hands. Nor was this great Man more severe against the Lusts of the Flesh, than against those other Branches of the Love of the World, the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life. (b) All Vanity and Affectation of Praise and Respect; all the Ostentation (saith he) and shew of Life, is utterly unlawful for a Christian. And all this is directly consonant to his Gloss (c) on those words of St. *Paul*, they that use the World as not abusing

(a) Μόλις καὶ κατὰ μικρὸν τῶν ἀναγκαίων ἀπτόμενον. Καὶ ὡς λειτουργίαν ἐπαχθῆ ὑποτελοῦντα τῇ φύσει, καὶ δυσχεραίνοντα μὲν τῷ καιρῷ τὴν περὶ ταῦτα διατριβῆς. Ὅροι κατὰ πλάτος. p. 454.

(b) Ἡκονοδοξία, καὶ ἡ ἀνθρωπαρέσκεια, καὶ τὸ πρὸς ἐπίδειξιν τὶ ποιεῖν, ὅλως ἐπὶ παντὸς πράγματος χριστιανοῖς ἀπηγόρευτα. p. 456.

(c) Παράκρεσις δέ ἐστιν ἡ ὑπὸρ τὴν χρείαν δαπάνη. p. 457.

abusing it, whatever is beyond *use* is *abuse*; directly consonant to his Definition of Temperance. (*d*) That it is the Extirpation of Sin; the Extermination of unruly Passions, and the Mortification of the Body, extending even to the *natural* Appetites and Affections of it.

(*d*) Ἐστὶν οὖν ἡ ἐγκράτεια, ἁμαρτίας ἀναίρεσις, πάθων ἀπαλλοτρίωσις σώματος νέκρωσις μέχρι καὶ ἀντῶν φυσικῶν παθημάτων τῆς καὶ ἐπιθυμίων. p. 445.

I know not what Scruples or Mistakes the Doctrine I here advance concerning this Part of my Perfect Man's Liberty, may be encounter'd with: But I am Confident, I have given no just occasion for any. I do not say of the Perfect, with *Jovinian*, that they cannot fall; but I say, they may, and ought to stand; and, if it be not their own fault, will do so. I do not affirm of them, as the Hereticks in *Vincentius Lyrinensis* did of their Party, that they are privileg'd from sin by a peculiar Grace, and transcendent Favour; but I affirm, that they shall not want Grace to preserve them from it, unless they be wanting to themselves. I do not go about to maintain that God sees no sin in his Children; but I maintain, That Mortal Sin is not the Spot of his Children. But do not I in this fall in with the *Papists*, who assert the Possibility of keeping the Commands of God? I Answer, that taking

them in the ſenſe, in which they themſelves in the Conference at *Ratisbone* defend this Doctrine, I do. They there tell us, that when they talk thus, they take the Law or Commands of God, not in a ſtrict and rigid, but in a favourable and equitable, *i. e.* a Goſpel Conſtruction: And this is ſo far from being Heterodox, that *Davenant* accounts it a plain giving up the Queſtion in Controverſy. But am I not run into the Error of the *Pelagians* and *Quakers*? I Anſwer, If the one or the other aſſert, That the Perfect Man paſſes thorough the whole Courſe of Life without falling into any ſin; or, That in the beſt part of Life, he is impeccable, and not ſubject to ſin (as in the Heat of Diſputation their Adverſaries ſeem ſometimes to faſten on them) I am at a wide diſtance from them. But if they teach, That the Perfect Man has Grace and Strength enough to forbear Wilful ſin, and that many actually do ſo, I am, I muſt confeſs, exactly of their Mind. But then, I am at the ſame time of the ſame Mind with St. *Auſtin* and St. *Jerome* too; for they teach the very ſame Doctrine: For they never contended about the Poſſibility of Freedom or Deliverance from *Mortal* ſin, but only from *Venial*. St. *Jerome* * ſhall explain his own Senſe, *Etenim abſque vitio, quod græcè dicitur*

* *Dial. Secund. ad Pelag.* p. 189.

tur Καθὰ, *hominem posse esse aio*: ἀναμάρτητον, *id est, sine Peccato, esse nego.* Which is the same thing that St. *Austin* commonly admits; That Man may be *sine Crimine*, but not *sine Peccato*; without Mortal, but not without Venial sin. And in this, they are certainly of the Mind of the Scripture; which every where represents the Perfect Man, as holy, blameless, undefiled, without Spot, walking with God: And in one word, as free from Sin. If any Man can reconcile these Texts, which are very numerous, with Mortal Sin, I will not say in the best state of the best Men, but a state of Sincerity, and Regeneration, I will acknowledge my Mistake. But till then, I cannot but think, the Doctrine I advance, necessary to establish the true Notion of Holiness, and convince us of our Obligation to it. This Doctrine is again necessary to wipe off those Aspersions and Calumnies the *Quakers* cast upon our Church; as if it held, That the Regenerate themselves may continue in their Sins; nay, cannot be freed from them. Our Church teaches indeed (*Artic.* 14.) That the most Perfect Men are never utterly exempt from Defects, Failings, and Human Infirmities; and I believe they themselves are not confident enough to teach otherwise: Only they will not call these Infirmi-

ties Sins: And then the whole Controverſy is reduced to this; We agree in the thing, but differ in the Name; And in this Difference, we are not only on the humbler, but the ſafer ſide too: For acknowledging them Sins, we ſhall be the better diſpoſed ſure, to be ſorry for them, to beg pardon of them, and watch againſt them.

The Fruit of this Liberty has been ſufficiently accounted for *Chap.* 3. And therefore I proceed.

§. 3. To propoſe ſome Rules for the Attainment of it.

1. The Mind muſt be grounded and rooted in the Faith; it muſt be thoroughly convinced and perſuaded of theſe great Articles of the Chriſtian Religion, That there is a God, and ſuch a God, a Holy, Juſt, Omniſcient, and Omnipotent one; the Incarnation, Suffering and Glory of the Bleſſed Jeſus; a Judgment to come, and the Eternal Rewards and Puniſhments of another Life. The firm Belief of theſe things does naturally promote theſe two Effects. 1. It will awaken a Sinner out of his Lethargy and Security; it will diſturb him in his ſinful Enjoyments, and fill his Mind with guilty Fears, and uneaſy Reflections. And when the Man finds no reſt, no ſecurity in his ſins, this will naturally oblige him

him to endeavour the Conqueſt of them. But then we muſt not ſtifle and ſuppreſs theſe Thoughts; we muſt give Conſcience full Liberty; we muſt hear the Dictates of our own Minds patiently; and conſider ſeriouſly thoſe terrible Truths, which they lay before us; till we go from this Exerciſe deeply impreſs'd with ſuch Notions as theſe: That our Sins, ſooner or later, will certainly bring upon us temporal and eternal Miſery: That nothing but ſincere Righteouſneſs can produce true and laſting Happineſs: That it is a dreadful Danger to dally too long with Indignation, or preſume too far on the Mercy of a Juſt, and Holy, and Almighty God: That the neglecting the great Salvation tender'd by the Goſpel, and procured by the Bleſſed Jeſus, the ſlighting the Blood of the Covenant, and grieving the Holy Spirit (all which we do by wilful Sin) is a Guilt, that will ſink down the obſtinate ſinner into the loweſt Hell; and render his Condition more intolerable than that of *Tyre* and *Sidon*, *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*. 2. The ſecond Effect of the firm Belief of theſe Goſpel Truths, is, that it begets in us a Contempt of this World, and all the things of it. To him that believes, How ſhort is Time compar'd to Eternity? How falſe, how empty are the Pleaſures of ſin, compared with thoſe

of Heaven? How insignificant the Esteem or Love of Man to that of God? How worthless are all our worldly Hopes and Pretensions in respect of an Interest in Jesus? Now the Soul that is once thoroughly possess'd with these Notions, what will it not do, what will it not suffer, rather than fall short of, or forfeit its Crown? In what state will it not be contented; nay, in what state will it not abound in Joy, whilst it holds fast the stedfastness of its Hope, and is secure of the Love of Jesus? Here begins that Purity of Heart, which is the Fountain of true Epicurism; that Greatness of Mind which alone is true Honour and Fortitude. But that Faith may have these Effects upon us, it must not be only a *true*, but a *lively* Faith. Therefore my

2. Second Rule, or, if you please, another Branch of the former Rule shall be this. They that will be free indeed, must not only believe the great Truths of the Gospel, but must frequently and seriously ponder them, till they have imprinted in themselves as clear, distinct and perfect *Ideas* of them as we are capable of. This will soon mortify the Appetites of the Body, correct our false Opinions of worldly Things, and baffle all the Sophistry and Confidence of Lust. A lively Faith, is a Faith that imports the most clear and natural,

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the most full and enlarg'd Notions of its Objects; a Faith, that not only looks upon the Articles of our Creed as true, but beholds them in a manner as present; and so represented and drawn to the Life, that they fill the Soul with great and moving Considerations. This Faith does not only believe that there is a God, but it beholds Him, and walks before him as present; it sees Him array'd in all his Glory, and in all his Majesty, in all the Power and all the Terrors, in all the Beauties and all the Graces of the Divine Nature: It does not only believe that there are Rewards and Punishments; but is extreamly sensible of the Terrors of the one, and Attractions of the other; and looks upon both as at the Door. It does not only acknowledge a Mediator, but takes a full view of the Misery of that state, wherein we lay through Sin; and of the Blessedness of that, into which we are translated by the Redemption which is in Jesus. It Contemplates this Mediator in all the several steps of Condescension and Humiliation; in all the Tenderness and Transports of his Passion; in all the melancholy Scenes of his Sufferings; and the bright and chearful ones of his Glory. This is the Faith that sets us free.

3. We must not stop in Faith, till it be made perfect in Love. We must meditate

Divine Truths till they have fir'd our Souls; till they have enkindled our Affections; till we be poſſeſs'd by an ardent Love of God, of Jeſus, of Righteouſneſs, and of Heaven; till all our other Deſires and Paſſions be converted into, and ſwallowed up of Love; till God becomes the Center of our Souls; and in Him we reſt, in Him we glory, and in Him we rejoice. O Love! how great and glorious are the things that are ſaid of Thee! 'Tis Thou who doſt impregnate and animate Faith it ſelf: 'Tis Thou who doſt ſurmount the Difficulties of Duty, and make the Yoke of Chriſt eaſy, and his Burden light: 'Tis Thou, who doſt caſt out Fear, and make Religion full of Pleaſure: 'Tis Thou that doſt make us watchful againſt Temptations, and impatient under the Interruptions of Duty: 'Tis Thou that makeſt us diſreliſh the Pleaſures of this World, and long to be diſſolved and to be with Chriſt. Here is the Liberty of the Sons of God. Bleſſed are they even in this World who attain it. But one Caution I muſt here add, That our Love muſt not be a *Flaſh*, a *Fit*, but a ſteddy and well ſetled Affection; an Affection that has the *Warmth* of *Paſſion*, and the *Firmneſs* of *Habit*. We muſt therefore by repeated Meditations and Prayers, daily nouriſh this Flame of the Altar, and not ſuffer it to go out. 4. We

4. We must never be at rest, till we have possessed our Minds with a perfect *Hatred* of the sin which we are most subject to. The Love of God, his Long-suffering and Forbearance, the Sufferings of Jesus, the Strugglings of the Spirit, the Peace and Pleasure of Holiness, the Guilt and Vexation, the Shame and Punishment of Sin, its ill Influence on our present Perfection and Happiness, on our Peace and Hopes, are proper Topicks to effect this. A thorough Hatred of Sin once settled and rooted in us, will produce that Sorrow, that Indignation, that Watchfulness, that Zeal, which will remove us far enough, not only from the Sin, but also from the ordinary Temptations to it; and place us almost without the Danger of a Relapse.

To this Fourth Rule, I should add this other; That when once a Man has resolved upon a new Course of Life, whatever Difficulties he finds in his Ways, whatever Baffles he meets with, he must never quit the Design of Virtue and Life; he must never give over Fighting till he Conquer. The Reason is plain, for he must either *Conquer* or *Die*. But this belonging rather to perseverance in Virtue, than the Beginning of it, therefore I but just mention it.

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5. It will not be imprudent in this Moral, as in Physical Cures, to observe diligently, and follow the Motions and Tendencies of Nature. Where there are Seeds of Generosity and Honour; the Turpitude and Shame of Sin, the Baseness and Ingratitude of it, the Love of God and of Jesus, and such-like, are fit Topicks to dwell upon. Where Fear is more apt to prevail, there the Terrors of the Lord are the most powerful Motive: And so whatever the Frame and Constitution of Nature be, it will not be difficult to find Arguments in the Gospel adapted to it, which will be so much the more *prevalent*, as they are the more *natural*.

6. Lastly, We must use all Means to obtain the Spirit of God; and to increase and cherish his Influence: We must ask, and seek, and knock, *i. e.* we must Pray, and Meditate, and Travel with Patience, and with Importunity, that our Heavenly Father may give us his Holy Spirit: And when we have it, we must not grieve it by any Deliberate Sin; nor quench it by Security or Negligence, by sensual Freedoms and Presumption; but we must cherish every Motion, improve every Desire and Passion that it works in us; we must shun every Appearance of Evil; we must press on towards Perfection; we must watch unto

unto Prayer; we muſt ſpend the Time of our ſojourning here in fear; we muſt rejoyce and glory in the Lord; and we muſt wait for the bleſſed Hope, and the glorious Appearance of the great God and our Saviour Chriſt Jeſus. And now I have finiſhed what I had to ſay on this Subject, of the Perfect Man's Liberty as it relates to Mortal or Wilful Sin. I have ſhewed what this Sin is; how far Man may be freed from it, and referring the Reader to *Chap.* 4. for the Fruit of this Freedom. I have here, Laſtly, given that Advice which I thought moſt ſerviceable to the Attainment of it. And through this whole Chapter, I have had regard, not only to Perfection, but Sincerity; it being indeed improper to do otherwiſe, ſince we cannot arrive at the one, but through the other. For Sincerity is Perfection in its Infancy, or Non-age; and Perfection is nothing elſe but Sincerity cultivated by Meditation and Diſcipline, and cheriſh'd by the Influence of Heaven. And now let no Man's Heart fail him while he contemplates the Difficulties which block up the Way to his Liberty. The Way indeed is ſteep, and the Top is high; but Serenity and Happineſs, Security and Glory dwell there. Many indeed are the Temptations which would forbid our Aſcent, and thruſt

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us down; but we are Armed all over; they cannot hurt us; the Spirit supports and encourages us; and nothing but our Cowardise and Inconstancy can prevent our Success: *Watch ye, stand fast, quit ye like men, be strong*; and then you shall be sure to Conquer and enter into Rest.

CHAP. VII.

Of Unfruitfulness *as it consists in* Idleness.

UNfruitfulness is a fit Subject to conclude a Discourse of *Liberty* with, or begin one of *Zeal*; for lying, like a Tract of Ground, between two bordering Kingdoms, it may indifferently be laid to either. As it implies a direct Opposition to Spiritual Life and Sincerity, it naturally falls in under the Consideration of *Zeal*; As it implies a Servile Subjection to some vile Lust or other, it naturally falls in under the Consideration of *Liberty*: So that by allotting it this Place, I shall at once compleat my Reflections on the Argument of Liberty, and make a good progress into that of Zeal.

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Barrenneſs, or Unfruitfulneſs, may in general beſt be underſtood by comparing it with a State of *Wickedneſs:* From which, as it is uſually diſtinguiſhed in the Notion of the Vulgar, ſo does it really differ on many Accounts. The one has in it an Air of *Defiance*, the other of *Unconcernment* for Religion; the one *forgets* God, the other *contemns* Him; the one has no *Reliſh* nor *Savour* of that which is *Good*, the other finds too much *Guſt* and *Pleaſure* in that which is *Evil*; the one makes us by Degrees *Enemies*, the other *Strangers* to God. In ſhort, there is little Doubt to be made, but that the *Omiſſion* of a *Duty*, and the *Commiſſion* of a *Crime*; *Lukewarmneſs* in that which is *Good*, and *Eagerneſs* and *Confidence* in that which is *Evil*, may, and generally do differ very widely in the Degrees of Guilt: From hence it is (the Sinner being always a partial and indulgent Judge of himſelf) that it is not unuſual for many, who ſeem to have ſome Abhorrence of Wickedneſs, to be far enough from apprehending much Evil, or much Danger in Unfruitfulneſs. This is a fatal Error; it fruſtrates the great Deſign of Religion, and robs it of its trueſt Honour, Good works. For what can Religion effect by that Man, who retains nothing of it but the bare Form and Profeſſion, and dares

dares promiſe himſelf not only Impunity, but a Heaven, in an uſeleſs and unprofitable Life?

Unfruitfulneſs, if more particularly enquired into, conſiſts in two Things, a *Neglect* of *Duty*; or a *Lifeleſs* and *Unprofitable* Performance of it. The Former I will call *Idleneſs*, the Latter *Lukewarmneſs*, *Coldneſs*, *Formality*; and treat of each in order; of the Former in this, and of the Latter in the following Chapter. And becauſe each of them are encumbred with Miſtakes and Errors, which ariſe not only from Self-Love and Partiality, but alſo from Shallowneſs of Judgment, join'd with Tenderneſs of Conſcience; I ſhall endeavour ſo to manage this Subject, as neither to diſcourage the weak, nor embolden the careleſs.

§. 1. Of Idleneſs. The Omiſſion of a Duty may be either *Habitual*, or *Occaſional* and *Accidental*: And accordingly the Caſe of Omiſſion may be very different.

1. An *Habitual Omiſſion* of Duty cannot conſiſt with Sincerity: A general Neglect of Duty defeats the main End of Religion, which is to Honour God, Adorn our Holy Profeſſion, and Promote the Good of Human Society; all which can never be attain'd but

but by following after Righteouſneſs, and abounding in the Fruits of it. By this Rule, an *Idle*, though *Innocent*, Life, muſt neceſſarily be accounted *irreligious* and *vicious*, being a flat Contradiction to our excellent Profeſſion. He who does not Pray, nor Meditate, nor purſue any End of Charity, though he be otherwiſe civil and regular in his Life, yet becauſe he does not work Righteouſneſs, becauſe he is ſo far from imitating the Zeal or Charity of the Bleſſed Jeſus, that he acts directly repugnant to both; therefore muſt he not be looked upon as a Diſciple of Jeſus, but as an Alien and a Stranger. He whoſe Life is ſpent in *Vanity* or *Drudgery*, in Pleaſure or Buſineſs, though his Pleaſure be not *impure*, nor his Buſineſs *unjuſt*, yet is he, before God, a Criminal, becauſe unprofitable; he has received the Grace of God in vain; the Light of the Goſpel has riſen upon him in vain; and he has ſerv'd no Intereſt of Virtue or Religion in his Generation; and therefore he will be excluded Heaven, with *the ſlothful Servant, who hid his Maſter's Talent in a Napkin*, Luke 19. 20.

2. The Caſe of an *accidental* or *occaſional* Omiſſion of Duty, is very different from that of *Habitual* Neglect of it; an *occaſional*

nal Omiſſion may be, not only *lawful*, but *neceſſary*; but the *Neglect* of Duty never can be either. The Circumſtances of poſitive Duty, and the Meaſures or Degrees of Moral Good, are not ſtrictly fix'd and ſetled; and therefore a ſingle Omiſſion, either in the one or the other, where ever there is a ſufficient Reaſon for it, can neither grieve the Spirit, nor fruſtrate the deſign of Religion; nor conſequently imply any Corruption in the Heart. But then we muſt take Care,

1. That our Omiſſion be not too frequent. We muſt always have regard, in this matter of Duty, to the great end and deſigns of its Injunction; we muſt take care that our Omiſſions in Moral Duties be not ſo often, that either the Honour of our Religion, or the Welfare of our Neighbour, ſuffer by it. Nor muſt we ſo often omit Inſtrumental Duties, Prayers, Reading, the Sacrament, and the like, as thereby to *abate*, or much leſs *extinguiſh*, our Spiritual Guſt and Fervour. Omiſſion of Duty, too often repeated, breeds a kind of Indifference, or Lukewarmneſs; and Lukewarmneſs ſoon paſſes into Coldneſs and Inſenſibleneſs; and this often ends in a reprobate Mind, and an utter Averſion for Religion.

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2dly. We muſt endeavour ſome way or other to compenſate the Omiſſion of a Duty; to make up by Charity, what we have defalk'd from Devotion; or to ſupply by ſhort Ejaculations, what we have been forc'd to retrench from fix'd and regular Offices of Prayer. And he that watches for Opportunities, either of *Improvement*, or *doing Good*, will, I believe, never have Reaſon to complain of the want of them: God will put into his hands either the one or the other; and for the Choice, he cannot do better, than follow God's.

3dly. A ſingle Omiſſion muſt never proceed from a *ſinful Motive*; from a Love of the World, or Indulgence to the Body; *Neceſſity* or *Charity* is the only juſt and proper Apology for it. *Inſtrumental* or Poſitive Duties may give way to *moral* ones; the Religion of the *Means*, to the Religion of the *End*; and in Moral Duties, the leſs may give way to the greater. But *Duty* muſt never give way to *Sin*, nor *Religion* to *Intereſt* or *Pleaſure*.

Having thus briefly given an account, what Omiſſion of Duty is, and what is not ſinful; and conſequently ſo ſetled the notion of Idleneſs, that neither the careleſs, nor the ſcrupulous, can eaſily miſtake their Caſe; I will now propoſe ſuch *Conſiderations* as I judge moſt likely to deter

Men from it; and ſuch *Advice* as may be the beſt Guard and Preſervative againſt it.

1. The Firſt Thing I would have every one lay to heart is, That a State of Idleneſs is a State of damnable Sin. Idleneſs is directly repugnant to the great Ends of God, both in our Creation and Redemption. As to our *Creation*; Can we imagine that God, who created not any thing but for ſome excellent End, ſhould Create Man for none, or for a ſilly one? The Spirit within us, is an active and vivacious Principle; our rational Faculties capacitate and qualify us for doing *Good*; this is the proper Work of Reaſon, the trueſt and moſt natural Pleaſure of a rational Soul. Who can think now, that our wiſe Creator lighted this Candle within us, that we might oppreſs and ſtifle it by Negligence and Idleneſs? That he contriv'd and deſtin'd ſuch a Mind to ſquander and fool away its Talents in Vanity and Impertinence? As to our *Redemption*, 'tis evident both what the Deſign of it is, and how oppoſite Idleneſs is to it. Chriſt gave himſelf for us, *to Redeem us from all Iniquity; and to purify to himſelf a peculiar people zealous of good works*, Tit. 2. 14. and this is what our Regeneration, or Sanctification aims at: *We are God's workmanſhip, created in Chriſt Jeſus unto good works, which*

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God has before ordained, that we ſhould walk in them, Epheſ. 2. 10. How little then can a uſeleſs and barren Life anſwer the Expectations of God? What a miſerable return muſt it be to the Blood of his Son; and how utterly muſt it diſappoint all the purpoſes of his Word and Spirit? But what need I argue further? the Truth I contend for is the expreſs and conſtant Doctrine of the Scriptures: Is not *Idleneſs* and *fulneſs of Bread* reckoned amongſt the Sins of *Sodom*? What means the Sentence againſt the *barren Fig-tree*, Luke 13. 7. but the Deſtruction and Damnation of the Idle and the Sluggiſh? The Indignation of God is not enkindled againſt the Barrenneſs of *Trees*, but *Men*. What can be plainer than the Condemnation of the unprofitable Servant, who periſhed becauſe he had not improved his Talent, *Matth.* 25. 38. And how frequently does the Apoſtle declare himſelf againſt the *idle* and *diſorderly*? And all this proceeds upon plain and neceſſary Grounds: Our Lord was an Example of Virtue as well as Innocence; and he did not only refrain from *doing Evil*, but he *went about doing good*. We can never ſatisfy the Intention of Divine Precepts by *Negative* Righteouſneſs: When God prohibits the *filthineſs of the fleſh and ſpirit*, he enjoins *the perfecting holineſs*

lineſs in his fear: When he forbids us *to do evil*, he at the ſame time preſcribes *the learning to do well.* What need I multiply more words? Idleneſs is a flat Contradiction to Faith, Hope, Charity; to Fear, Vigilance, Mortification; and therefore certainly muſt be a damning Sin: *Theſe* are all active and vigorous Principles; but Idleneſs enfeebles and diſ-ſpirits, manacles and fetters us: *Theſe* are pure, ſtrict, and ſelf-denying Principles; but Idleneſs is ſoft and indulgent: *Theſe* conquer the World and the Body, raiſe and exalt the Mind; but Idleneſs is far from enterprizing any thing; from attempting any thing that is good; it pampers the Body, and effeminates and diſſolves the Mind; and finally, whatever Innocence or Inoffenſiveneſs it may pretend to, it does not only terminate in Sin, but has its beginning from it; from Stupidity and Ignorance, from Vanity and Levity, from Softneſs and Senſuality, from ſome prevailing Luſt or other.

2. Next after the *Nature*, the *Conſequences* of Idleneſs are to be conſidered; and if it be taken in the utmoſt latitude, there is ſcarce any Sin which is more juſtly liable to ſo many Tragical Accuſations; for it is the Parent of *Diſhonour* and *Poverty*, and of moſt of the *Sins* and *Calamities* of this mortal life. But at preſent

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I view it only as it is drawn with a half Face, and that the much leſs deformed of the two: I conſider it here as pretending to *Innocence*; and flattering it ſelf with the Hopes of Happineſs: And yet even thus, ſuppoſing it as harmleſs and inoffenſive as it can be, yet ſtill theſe will be the miſerable Effects of it: It will rob Religion, and the World, of the Service due to both: It will bereave us of the Pleaſure of Life, and the Comfort of Death; and ſend us down at laſt to a curſed Eternity. For where are the Virtues that ſhould maintain the Order and Beauty of Human Society; that ſhould relieve and redreſs the Miſeries of the World? Where are the Virtues that ſhould vindicate the Honour of Religion, and demonſtrate its Divinity as effectually as Predictions or Miracles can do? Where are the bright Examples that ſhould convert the unbelieving part of Mankind, and inflame the believing part with a generous Emulation? Certainly the lazy Chriſtian, the ſlothful Servant, can pretend to nothing of this kind. As to the *Pleaſure* of Life, if true and laſting, if pure and ſpiritual, 'tis eaſy to diſcern from what Fountains it muſt be drawn. Nothing but Poverty of Spirit can procure our Peace, nothing but Purity of Heart our Pleaſure. But ah! how far are the Idle and Unactive from

these Virtues? Faith, Love, and Hope, are the Seeds of them: Victories and Triumphs, Devotion, Alms, and Good Works the Fruits of them: But what a stranger to these is the Drone and Sluggard? Then for the *Comfort of Death*, it must proceed from a well-spent Life: He that sees nothing but a vast Solitude and Wilderness behind him, will never, like the *Israelites*, see a *Canaan* before him: Life must be fill'd with Good Works, or else Death will look but dark and gloomy: When the Conscience enquires every where after the Effects of the Word, and the Spirit, and the Blood of Jesus, and can discover in all the Parts, in all the Paths of Life, no Tracks of any thing but *Fancy* and *Fortune*, *Humour* and *Indulgence*; how will it shriek, and faint, and tremble! what pensive, melancholy Doubts will damp and choak its Hope! And how can it be otherwise? Alas! the Mind of a Christian is sufficiently informed that every Man shall receive according to what he has done in the Body; God will judge every Man according to his Works; what then must become of him who has none to shew? If Immortality and Glory, if Life and Peace be the Reward of *well doing*, nay, of *patient continuance* in well-doing, what will become of the drousy, and supine, and careless,

less, the Sot and the Sluggish, who have slept, and fool'd, and trifled away Life?

3. I might aggravate the Guilt of Idleness, by taking an Estimate of the *Talents* it wastes, the *Obligations* it slights, and the *Hopes* it forfeits. I might render Man more jealous and apprehensive of falling into it, by observing how generally it prevails; which is a plain Proof, either of the Strength of the Temptation, or of our Propension; a plain Proof, either that there is I know not what secret Magick in the Sin, or else that the Cheat it imposes upon the World is a very clever, a very dexterous one. But I have said enough; and where the former Considerations fail, these will hardly succeed: Therefore I will now pass on from Arguments, to Advice, which was the next thing proposed to be done.

And here my Advice must have regard to two different sorts of Persons. 1. To such as are born to plentiful or competent Fortunes. 2. To such as are to raise their own, or to provide for the Support and Maintenance of themselves and their Families, by their Labour or Industry in some Calling or Profession. To the former the best Directions I can give, are these:

1. He that is Master of his Time, ought to devote the more to Religion: *To whom God has given much, of him much will be required:*

required: Nor has ſuch an one any Excuſe left, either for Omiſſion, or a haſty and curſory Performance of Duty, but one, one that will increaſe his Guilt, *i. e.* Lazineſs, Pleaſure, or ſome Sin or other. Such an one therefore ought to be conſtant and diligent in frequenting the Publick Aſſemblies of the Church; his Attendance upon Prayers, Sacraments, Sermons, muſt be ſuch as becomes a Man, who as it has pleaſed God, ſeems born not to provide for Life, but only to live, only to improve and enjoy Life, and carry on the nobler Deſigns of it; and as becomes a Man whoſe good or ill Example is of ſuch vaſt Importance to the Service or Diſ-ſervice of Religion. Nor muſt ſuch an one's Attendance on the Publick, excuſe him from the Religious Offices of the Cloſet, or his Family; he ought to abound in each: He may be more frequent in Meditation and Prayer, in Reading and Inſtruction, and perform each with more Juſtneſs and Solemnity than others can.

2. Perſons of Fortune ought to be careful in the Choice of Intimates and Friends. Converſation is not always a Loſs, but ſometimes a Gain of Time: We often need to have our Forgetfulneſs reliev'd, our Drowſineſs awaken'd, by the Diſcourſes and Reflections of our Friends. If Diſcourſe were generally ſeaſon'd with

Grace

Grace, Conversation would be the greatest Blessing; if with Sense and Reason, Innocence and Prudence, it would be the most agreeable Entertainment of Human Life. But how mischievous is the Acquaintance which infects us with Vanity and Lightness of Spirit, which shews us nothing but a Gaudy Outside and a Frothy Soul! whose Example binds Men in Civility to be foolish, and makes Confidence, and Vice, and Misspence of Time, a Fashion.

3. It were to be wished, That Persons of the best Rank, were ever bred up to something; to something that might improve, to something that might amuse and innocently engage their Minds; to something that might employ Life, without incumbring it. And yet alas! what need I wish this? How many excellent Qualities are necessary to render a Gentleman worthy of the Station where God has placed him? Let him pursue *these*. How many are the Virtues, how many the Duties to which a Christian is oblig'd? Let him attend *these*. There is a great deal requisite to make a good Master, a good Husband, a good Father, a good Son, a good Neighbour, a good Parishioner, an excellent Subject, and an excellent Friend; and yet there are many other Relations besides these. In a word, there is no Man, who

who when he ſhall appear before God, will not be found to have omitted many Duties; and to have perform'd many other with leſs Care and Diligence than he ought; and ſurely ſuch an one cannot juſtly complain for want of Buſineſs. I doubt rather on the contrary, That whoever takes a juſt and full view of things, will have reaſon to complain, That Life is ſhort, and our Work great; That let us uſe all the Diligence we can, and be as frugal of our Time as we will, we arrive much ſooner at a Maturity of Years, than of Knowledge and Virtue.

4. The Diverſions of Perſons of this Quality ought to be well regulated; ſuch as become the Character of a *Gentleman*, and the Dignity of a *Chriſtian*; that is, they muſt be neither *mean* nor *vicious*. But I have treated this and the foregoing Heads more copiouſly in *Human Life*; to which I refer my Reader.

As to ſuch, in the next place, who are engag'd in a Profeſſion, I have particularly conſidered their ſtate in ſeveral Places, and find little to add here, but only to mind them, That they may be guilty of Idleneſs too; That their Idleneſs is the more criminal, the leſs Temptation they have to it. They may neglect the Duties of their Calling, I mean their Secular Calling; and if they

they be unfaithful and negligent in their Temporal Concern, it is not to be expected that they ſhould be more ſollicitous and induſtrious about their ſpiritual one. They may again ſuffer the Cares of this Life to thruſt out thoſe of another; and then they are truly idle and ſlothful Servants to God, how induſtrious and faithful ſoever they are to the World: For Life is but waſted and miſ-ſpent, if it make not Proviſion for *Eternity*; and it matters little whether it be waſted in *Pleaſure* or in *Drudgery*.

CHAP. VIII.

Of Unfruitfulneſs, *as it conſiſts in* Lukewarmneſs, Coldneſs, *or* Formality.

IN the former Chapter I conſidered that part of Unfruitfulneſs which conſiſts in the *Omiſſion* of Duty: I am now to conſider another part of it, which conſiſts in too *perfunctory a Performance* of it. Beſides thoſe who are truly unprofitable, becauſe they ſlight or neglect the Duties of Religion; there is another ſort of Men, who at the laſt Day will fall under the ſame

ſame Character and Condemnation; not becauſe they perform no Duties, but becauſe their Performance of them is depretiated by Coldneſs and Formality: Men who make a fair Appearance of Religion, and yet have no inward ſpiritual Life: Men, who do generally obſerve the external Duties of Religion, but with ſo little Guſt, with ſuch Indifference and Lukewarmneſs, that they are neither acceptable to God, nor uſeful to themſelves. This State of Deadneſs may be conſidered either more *generally*, as it runs through the whole courſe of our Lives and Actions; or more *particularly*, in this or that Inſtance of Religion.

1. When 'tis ſo general, that the Bent and Courſe of our Lives is, for want of reliſh of the Things of God, perverted and depraved; when we have no Deſigns, drive on no Ends, that are ſuitable to the *Excellency* and *Dignity* of our *Nature*; to the *Holineſs* of our *Profeſſion*, and to the great and manifeſt *Obligations* of God: When we have no Joys or Pleaſures, no Thirſts or Appetites, that do truly become a Chriſtian; when we make no Progreſs, no Advance towards our great End; when our Diſcourſes and Employments have no Tincture of the Spirit, and no Tendency

to

to Edification. I think we may then boldly conclude, that this is a ſtate of *Carnality* and *Death*. And that this want of Reliſh in the general Courſe of our Lives, proceeds from a real want of a ſincere Faith, and true Illumination. For were the Mind once truly Enlightened; were it once clearly convinced, firmly and habitually perſuaded, of the Beauty and Excellency of the Things of God; as we ſhould have Notions different from thoſe of worldly carnal Men, ſo would there conſequently be a Difference in the Nature of our Hopes and Fears, of our Deſires and Deſigns, of our Joys and Sorrows; and as neceſſarily in the main Scope and Tendency of our Converſation. Whoever therefore finds this general Stupidity in the Courſe of his Life, let him not flatter himſelf in the Performance of any of the Duties of Religion: He has a corrupt, carnal, and blind Heart; his Performances proceed not from true Principles, and have not that Life and Vigour in them that they ought; they are as different from the Performances of a Man truly Regenerate and Sanctified, as the Civilities and Complements of a Well-bred Acquaintance, from the ſubſtantial Offices of a Sincere and Affectionate Friend. Nor can any Man, who will take the leaſt pains to examine him-

himſelf, be ignorant of, or miſtaken in the Condition of his Soul, if this be it. For whoever will act honeſtly and impartially, ought not to paſs a Sentence of Abſolution on himſelf, upon the bare Performance of ſome relative, or inſtrumental Duties of Religion; but he ought to enquire, Firſt, What Virtues he Practiſes, which put him upon *Expence*, *Hazard*, or *Travel*; what Works of Piety or Charity he performs; and what Proportion they bear to his Ability. Next, he ought to conſider the *Deſign* and *End* he propoſes to himſelf in all his Religious Performances; whether he ſeek the Honour of God, the Welfare of Man, and his own Improvement and Growth in Goodneſs; or whether he does this meerly to acquit himſelf of a Task, and diſcharge himſelf of what he takes for granted as a Duty, though he finds no pleaſure, no advantage in it. Thirdly, He muſt reflect upon the *Frame* and *Temper* of his Mind in reference to theſe Duties; what Hunger and Thirſt he has for Righteouſneſs; what Warmth, Ardor, Elevation, or Earneſtneſs of Mind accompanies his Performances; what Peace and Pleaſure his Reflection on them; or whether Religion be not a burthen to him, or ſomething to which Cuſtom only reconciles him. Laſtly, He ought to examine what Opera-

Operation, what *Influence* his Religious Performances have upon him. Prayer, Hearing, Reading, and ſuch-like Duties, do naturally tend to enlighten the Mind, purify the Heart, increaſe our Love, ſtrengthen our Faith, and confirm our Hope; and therefore where this is not the Effect of them, we may conclude, that they are not diſcharg'd in that manner, and with that Sincerity they ought. He therefore that will examine himſelf aright, muſt not ask himſelf how often he Reads, how often he Hears, *&c.* and then reſt there; but muſt ask himſelf what *Effect* theſe Performances have had upon his Mind; which he will ſoon diſcern, if he demand of himſelf, what the bent and ſcope of his Life is; how much he advances and improves in the Conqueſt of any Vice, and the Attainment of any Virtue; what he loves, or what he hates; what Eſteem he has for the Things of God, and what for the things of Men. And, in a word, how he follows after Univerſal Righteouſneſs; and how he increaſes in Purity of Heart, and Poverty of Spirit.

2. *Lukewarmneſs*, or *Coldneſs*, may be conſidered more *particularly*, as it diſcovers it ſelf in the Performance of this or that Duty; in Hearing, Reading, Prayer, and Participation of the Lord's Supper. Now

'tis

'tis certain, that there is a Deadneſs in theſe Duties, which proceeds from a *carnal* and *unſanctified* Heart, and is a plain Symptom of a *State of Sin*: And yet it is too common, that they who are ſubject to it, make little Reflection upon it, and are little concerned for it. On the other hand, many complain of Lifeleſsneſs in Duty, where there is no juſt ground for this Complaint; and this is no ſmall Evil to ſuch; for it diſturbs the Peace of their Minds, damps the Chearfulneſs and Alacrity of their Service, and clogs and encumbers their Religion with needleſs Doubts and Scruples. Some have gone about to ſet this matter right very unskilfully; and whilſt they have, as they thought, ſhun'd *Enthuſiaſtick* Raptures, and *Irregular* Heats, have really betrayed the Cauſe of *true* and *ſolid Fervency of Spirit*; and talked of Prayer, and ſuch other Duties, in ſuch a manner, as cannot but reflect diſadvantagiouſly on themſelves, amongſt ſuch, as are moderately vers'd in the Scriptures, and have any Experience of the Power of God's Word and Spirit upon their Souls. But what ſurpriſes me moſt is, that ſome, of very deſerved Repute, have Taught, That the *ſeeking Spiritual Pleaſure in Prayer*, is an *Enemy* to *Perfection*; That *Heat* and *Ardor* of Spirit in Prayer, does often happen

pen to the *weakeſt* Chriſtians; and very ſeldom to the *Perfect*. But my Buſineſs not being to combat the Opinions of Men, but to advance Truths in the moſt charitable, and in the moſt effectual manner that I can; Therefore without taking Notice of the Motives or Reaſons, which have byaſs'd any on this Subject, I will lay down two or three Propoſitions, which will, I hope, clear this Matter, and promote the Deſign I am now carrying on.

1. Then, *Lifeleſsneſs* or Lukewarmneſs in theſe Duties muſt never be *conſtant*. There is a vaſt difference between *habitual* and *accidental* Coldneſs in Duty; the former is the Symptom of worldly, carnal, and unregenerate Minds; but not the latter. Many are the Accidents which diſturb and indiſpoſe the Body; many are the things which diſtract and clog the Mind; from both which becauſe we ſhall never be utterly free in this World, therefore our Devotion will never be ſo conſtant and uniform, but that it will have its *Interruptions* and *Allays*; and Dulneſs and Lifeleſsneſs will ſometimes ſeize upon the beſt of Chriſtians. But then, if this ſpiritual Deadneſs in Religious Exerciſes be *fixt*, *conſtant*, and *habitual*, it muſt needs be a Proof of a corrupt Mind; For 'tis

impoſſible that there ſhould be a true Principle of Grace within, which ſhould never, or very rarely, ſhew it ſelf in the Sincerity and Fervency of our Devotion. How is it poſſible, that that Man, who is generally ſlight and ſuperficial in his Confeſſion, ſhould have a true Compunction, and ſincere Contrition for ſins? How is it poſſible that he, who is generally indifferent, formal and cold in his Petitions, ſhould have a juſt Senſe either of his Wants or Dangers; or a true Value for the Grace and Favour of God? The Sum is, Deadneſs in Duty, is either General or Rare, Common or Accidental: If it befals us *Commonly*, 'tis an Argument of an unregenerate Heart; if *Rarely*, 'tis not. But if the Returns of Life and Deadneſs in Duty be ſo frequent and unconſtant, that 'tis impoſſible to determine whether the one or the other prevail moſt; then 'tis plain that the State alſo of ſuch a Man is very dubious.

2. Duty muſt never be deſtitute of *Sincerity*, though it may of *Pleaſure* and Tranſport; it muſt never be without *Seriouſneſs* and Concernment, though it may be very defective in the *Degrees* of *Love* and *Ardency*. Thus in Prayer, the Tenderneſs and Contrition of the Soul, diſſolv'd in

Love

Love and Sorrow, is a Frame of Spirit much above what the Penitent commonly arrives at. But an Averſion for ſin, a firm Reſolution to forſake it; and a hearty Deſire to be enabled by the Grace of God ſo to do, is what he muſt not want. So again, Joy and Tranſport, the Ardor and Exultancy of Mind, is the Effect of a clear Underſtanding; an aſſur'd Conſcience; a Heart enflam'd with Love, and a ſtrict Life: Whoever therefore, falls ſhort in the one, will generally fall ſhort in the other too. But every Chriſtian, that is truly ſuch, muſt have a true ſenſe of his Wants, a hearty deſire to pleaſe God, a true Notion of his Goodneſs, and a ſteddy dependence upon it thorough Chriſt. And theſe things are ſufficient to unite our Hearts and our Lips in the ſame Petitions; to make us in earneſt, in all the Duties we perform; and careful to intend the main end of them.

3. The Prayer of the *Perfect* Man is generally offer'd up with the *tendereſt* and moſt *exalted* Paſſion; and a holy Pleaſure mingles it ſelf in every part of his Office: His Petitions and Praiſes; his Confeſſions, Deprecations and Confidences, are all of them Expreſſions of warm and delightful Paſſions. And how can we well conceive

it otherwiſe? Muſt not thoſe *Praiſes* and *Magnificats* be full of Joy and Tranſport, which flow from a full Aſſurance of the Divine Favour, from a long Experience of his Love, and from the glorious Proſpect of a Bleſſed Eternity? Can thoſe *Deprecations* and *Confidences* want a heavenly Calm and Tranquility of Spirit, which reſt upon the Mediation of Jeſus, the Promiſes of an immutable God, and the Pledge of his Spirit? Can thoſe *Confeſſions* want Contrition, that have all the Tenderneſs that holy Zeal, and the humbleſt Reflections can inſpire them with? Which are poured forth by a Soul enlighten'd, purify'd, ſtrong in the Faith, rooted and grounded in Love; by a Soul conſequently that has the livelieſt Senſe of the Deformity and Danger of Sin, of the Beauty and Pleaſure of Holineſs, of the Infinite Goodneſs of God, and of that Love of Chriſt that paſſeth Knowledge? Can, finally, thoſe *Petitions* want Deſire and Flame, which are offer'd up by a Soul that hungers and thirſts after Righteouſneſs, that counts all things but dung and droſs in compariſon of Jeſus, that pants after God, that longs to be diſſolv'd and to be with Chriſt? And as we may thus, from the Nature of things, collect what kind of Prayers thoſe of the Perfect Man generally are; ſo may we, from the

Ex-

Example of the Royal *Pſalmiſt*, and others, demonſtrate all this to be no vain Speculation; but real Matter of Fact. 'Tis true, *Weight* and *Dignity* of *Matter*, *Gravity* and *Significancy* of *Expreſſion*, are the Characters moſt conſpicuous in *Publick* Offices, in the beſt and moſt ancient Prayers: And particularly in the Lord's Prayer. We find in them few or no Figures of Speech, no Vehemence of Expreſſion. But it is true too, That the Devotion of a Soul diſingag'd, as it were, from the Body, retir'd from the World, collected within it ſelf, raiſed by daily Contemplation, and accuſtom'd to Converſe with Heaven, flows naturally and eaſily. Thoſe great *Ideas*, which ſuch a Prayer as that of our Lord's Compoſure preſent to the Mind, inflame the Deſire, awaken all the Paſſions of the Holy Man, without any Labour of Imagination, or Artifice of Words.

Thus have I conſidered the Nature of Lukewarmneſs; and ſhew'd how far the Perfect Man is remov'd from it. My next Buſineſs is, to perſuade and exhort Men to quit it; and become ſincere and zealous. Only I muſt, Firſt, take notice by the way, That beſides Idleneſs and Lukewarmneſs, there is ſometimes a Third Cauſe or occaſion of Unfruitfulneſs; which deſerves ne-

ver to be ſlighted: That is, *Fickleneſs, Unſteadineſs*, or *Inconſtancy*. Many there are, who often purpoſe, project, and reſolve great Matters; but never bring forth any Fruit to Perfection; What they Build one day, they throw down another. They put on as many various moral Forms, as *Proteus* in the Poets does natural ones; ſometimes they are in a fit of Zeal; at other times nothing but Coldneſs and bare Form; ſometimes they are in the Camp of Virtue; ſometimes in that of Vice. In a word, they halt like the *Iſraelites*, between *God* and *Baal*; and are divided and diſtracted between a *Senſe* of *Duty*, and the *Love* of the *World* and the *Body*; between the *Checks* and Incitements of *Conſcience* on the one hand, and ſome fooliſh *Inclinations* on the other. This State I have had an Eye to very often, nor ſhall I forget it here; but ſhall propoſe ſuch a Method for the Cure of Lukewarmneſs and Formality, as may be alſo of very good uſe to all ſuch, as fall ſhort of the main End of Religion; being not truly and thoroughly changed; but are only *almoſt perſuaded to be Chriſtians*: And only not altogether *ſo far from the Kingdom of Heaven* as others. This being premiſed, I proceed, and

1. I will

1. I will Enquire into the Cauſes from whence Lukewarmneſs and all abortive Attempts after Virtue, flow.

2. I will ſhew the *Folly*, *Guilt*, and *Danger* of a Laodicean State.

§ 1. Of the Cauſes, *&c.* Theſe are generally Four.

1. Men finding themſelves under great Difficulties in coming up to Holineſs, in the true genuine and Goſpel Notion of it, have endeavour'd to enlarge the Way, and widen the Gate that leads to Life; and have therefore form'd to themſelves more ſoft and pliant Notions of Vice and Virtue; Such as may be more eaſily accommodated either to their particular *Inclinations*, or to the *Modes* and *Faſhions* of the World, than thoſe of Chriſt and his Apoſtles can. Hence it is, that amongſt ſuch as pretend to ſome regard for Religion, Humility, Poverty of Spirit, Self-denial, Abſtinence and Mortification, are ſo far from being viſible in their Practice, that we ſeem to have almoſt loſt the Notion of them. And the Pride of Life, and the Luſt of the Eyes, are ſo univerſally practiſed, that though we know, that theſe in St. *John*, are the Names of Vices, we ſcarce know

what the Things themſelves are. We have confounded the Mears and Bounds of Vice and Virtue; and ſuch are the Freedoms, I will not ſay of thoſe who profeſs Debauchery, but Chriſtianity, that if they be conſiſtent with the Sanctity and Purity of the Goſpel, 'twill be hard to determine, what Exceſs is. And in a word, how many are there, who making a Profeſſion of living by Faith, and looking for the bleſſed Hope, and the glorious Appearance of Chriſt, do yet live, as if all the buſineſs of Life were to get and enjoy as much of this World as they can; who profeſſing themſelves the Diſciples of Chriſt, whoſe Heart was lowly, his Fortune mean, and his Appearance humble, do yet lay out their Time, their Labour, their Wealth on this one Deſign, to make ſuch a ſhew, ſuch a Figure in the World, as may render them the Gaze and Envy of their Neighbours? And, as our Indulgence to our ſelves in theſe things, which relate to the Pride and Vanity of Life, and the Eaſe and Appetites of the Body, is very great; ſo on the ſame ground, and for the ſame reaſon, is our *Zeal* for the Intereſt of Virtue, and the Honour of God, very little, faint, and remiſs. Converſation has very little Savour, very little Grace in it; and we are ſo far from being reſolute,

lute, and induſtrious to awe, or ſhame Vice abroad, that we our ſelves ſhould be almoſt out of Countenance, if we ſhould be obſerv'd to pay any particular Reſpect to Religion or Virtue in Company. The Government of our Families is ſo lax and eaſy, that it ſavours more of Coldneſs and Indifferency, than Fervency of Spirit. 'Tis true indeed, theſe I am ſpeaking of do generally frequent the Houſe of God; *and they ſit before him as his People; and delight to hear his Word:* But ſo did the *Jews*, when God tells them, in the Prophet *Ezek.* 33. 31. *that their hearts went after their Covetouſneſs:* And in the Prophet *Iſaiah*, we have but an odd Character of the Morals of theſe People; of whom, God ſaith, *yet they ſeek me daily, and delight to know my ways:* Nay, further, *they delight in approaching to God*, Iſa. 58. 2. Now though ſuch, as I am ſpeaking of, may not be guilty to this Degree, ſo as to be chargeable with open Wickedneſs; yet I am very much afraid, that even in this Duty they but promote the Cheat and Impoſture they put upon themſelves; and make their Diligence in this point miniſter to quiet their Conſciences in their Laodicean State; for 'twere eaſy to prove that ſuch as theſe do more generally aim at the Entertainment of the Ear, than the Reformation

mation of the Heart. And we may ſay of Preachers now, as God did of *Ezekiel*; *And lo, thou art unto them as a lovely Song, of one that has a very pleaſant Voice*, Ezek. 33. 32. The Muſick of the Voice; the Gracefulneſs of Delivery; a Flow of Words; the Surprize of Novelty, and Notion; the Beauty of Sentences; and the Sparkling of Wit and Fancy, or an Appearance of Learning: Theſe are, I doubt, too often the things that draw together and charm an Auditory: And ſo all are pleaſed, but none converted or edified; for who ſweats or bluſhes, who trembles or grows pale at theſe Sermons? Who goes away from them wounded, or ſtruck through, ſerious, and penſive, full of pious Fears, and devout Deſires?

2. A *Laodicean* State ſprings from Sloth and Puſillanimity, or the Want of a thorough and well-grounded Reſolution. This was one Cauſe of the *Iſraelites* Fluctuation and Uncertainty; they were indeed deſirous of a *Canaan*, but were not forward to purchaſe it, by tedious Marches, hazardous Encounters, and the Hardſhip of Hunger and Thirſt, and ſuch like: They were ever and anon willing to have preferr'd the Diſhonour and Servitude of *Egypt*,

Egypt, with Security and Fulneſs, before a *Canaan* on theſe Terms. And thus it is, this day with Chriſtians of a *Laodicean* Spirit, and a doubtful ſtaggering Allegiance. An Heaven they would have, but would not purchaſe it at too dear a rate; they would be accounted the Diſciples of Chriſt, and ſhare in the Merits of his Sufferings, but they would not take up his Croſs, in any ſenſe, and follow him. But alas! *Iſrael* might as well have gained their Liberty without going out of *Egypt*; or a *Canaan* without Travel and Hardſhip, and Blood, as Theſe, Virtue, and Heaven, without Watchfulneſs and Induſtry: We may as well hope to ſupport and increaſe the Health and Strength of the Body, without Food or Exerciſe, as that of the Soul, without Meditation and Prayer: We may as ſoon Conquer our Enemies without Diſcipline, Expence and Blows, as maſter our Corruptions and become Virtuous, without ſpiritual Watchfulneſs, Travel, or Contention. There is indeed Force and Efficacy enough in the Word of God, to enlighten the Mind, and purify the Heart; if we would but frequently and ſeriouſly Read and Meditate it. The Grace of the Spirit is ſufficient to conquer our Corruptions, and ſtrengthen and eſtabliſh us in Faith and Obedience, if we did but earneſtly

earneſtly and frequently pray for it; and cheriſh and improve it when obtain'd. The Means which God has preſcribed are undoubtedly proper and ſuitable, powerful and effectual to the Attainment, Preſervation, and Increaſe of Holineſs; and all his Ordinances have a Divine Virtue and Energy in them, if they be but duly and conſcientiouſly made uſe of. But if we do not watch; if we do not meditate; if we do not pray; if we expoſe our ſelves to a vain and trifling Converſation; if we indulge the Body all the Eaſe it is inclined to; and put our ſelves upon no Duties; practiſe no Diſcipline that we have any Reluctancy for, 'tis not to be wonder'd at, if our Virtue be crazy and ſickly, if our Performances be cold and unedifying, our Faith weak, our Affections low and groveling, our Life unſteddy and unprofitable, our Religion deſtitute of true Pleaſure, and our latter End of any rational Comfort, or well-grounded Confidence. 'Tis naturally to be expected that the Soul of the Sluggard ſhould be like his Field. *Prov.* 24. 30. *I went by the Field of the Slothful, and by the Vineyard of the Man void of underſtanding; and lo it was all grown over with Thorns, and Nettles had covered the face thereof, and the ſtone wall thereof was broken down:* This is one plain

plain Cauſe, and commonly the firſt of our halting between *God* and *Baal*; namely, our Idleneſs and Sloth in Religion, joyned with Puſillanimity and Cowardiſe, which moves us to decline all Difficulties, and diſables us to make a bold Reſiſtance againſt Temptations: How criminal and guilty this muſt render us in the ſight of God, 'tis no difficulty to gueſs. Is this the Zeal, the Revenge of an humble and active Penitent? Is this to redeem the Time, and efface the Memory of our paſt Sins and Provocations? Is this the Converſation that becomes the Children of the Light, and of the Day? Is this our hunger and thirſt after Righteouſneſs? Is this our Ambition, our Paſſion for an Heaven? Finally, Is it thus we requite the Mercies and Obligations of God, and the Love of Jeſus, that paſſeth Knowledge? Shall ſuch halting trimming Chriſtians as theſe, think ye, ever be judg'd endued with a true and living Faith, who expreſs in the whole Tenour of their Lives, ſo much Coldneſs and Indifference for that Salvation, which the Son of God thought worth the purchaſing, by ſo much Travel, and ſo much Sorrow, ſo much Shame, and ſo much Blood?

3. A Third Cauſe of our Halting between *God* and *Baal* is ſome Degree of Infidelity. This was the Caſe of *Iſrael* too. They were ever prone to Idolatry; partly train'd up to it in *Egypt*, and elſewhere; partly being more capable of forming an *Idea* of a Finite and Topical God, than of an Infinite and Univerſal one, *Jer.* 23. 23. Partly being fond of following the Faſhions of other Nations. And laſtly, mov'd, partly by that great and long Proſperity, which *Egypt* and other Idolatrous Nation ſenjoy'd; and no doubt, comparing it too, with the Variety and Uncertainty of their own Fortune and the frequent Diſappointment of their Expectations, *Hoſea* 2. never laying it to Heart all the while, that the way to ſecure their Proſperity, was to change, not their God, but their Manners. I would to God this were not too lively a Deſcription of the State of too many Chriſtians; and that we could not trace our Lukewarmneſs and Fickleneſs in Religion, too plainly back to the ſame Source or Origine; namely, ſome Degrees of Infidelity. I wiſh the Proſperity of the Wicked do not ſomewhat undermine the Belief of a Providence: I wiſh, whatever we talk of a Treaſure in another World, we do not now and then think it wiſeſt to have our Portion

Portion in this. I am afraid, that the Decays and Diſſolutions of our Nature in Death, the Rottenneſs and Corruption of the Grave, and the Variety of Changes and Fortunes, our very Duſt undergoes, may tempt us to ſome Scruples and Jealouſies about a poſthumous Life. But however it be in theſe points, I am too too well aſſur'd, that we do often doubt, whether Virtue be the true Bleſſedneſs of Life; whether there be that Pleaſure in Righteouſneſs the Scripture affirms there is. I am confident, the Notions of Righteouſneſs and Holineſs, with which the Scripture furniſhes us, are often blurr'd and blotted by the Maxims and Cuſtoms of the World; and perſuade my ſelf, that there is ſcarcely one of thoſe, that are *Laodiceans* and Trimmers in Religion, that do not flatter themſelves, that God will not be as ſevere as his Threats; and that he will receive them into Heaven upon milder and ſofter Terms than the Goſpel propoſes. Some ſuch kind of Infidelity as this muſt poſſeſs the Heart, where-ever the Life is ſo infinitely below our Profeſſion. When *the Word preached doth not profit*, it is becauſe it is not *mingled* with a due Meaſure of *Faith in thoſe that hear it*. If we did truly believe the Revelations of God; if we did ſee the Promiſes of God as evident and preſent

ſent by Faith, though diſtant in themſelves, 'twere impoſſible but they muſt move, but they muſt take us; 'twere impoſſible, but they muſt enkindle in us another ſort of Deſire, and this Deſire would ſoon produce another ſort of Endeavours, another ſort of Life. When *Moſes* beheld *Canaan* from *Piſga*, how paſſionately did he deſire to enter into *that* good Land? When the Diſciples had ſeen Jeſus Aſcend up into Heaven, how were they tranſported with a Deſire of following him! how unſpeakable was their Joy! how fervent their Prayers! how laſting and enlarged their Gratitude! *They returned to Jeruſalem with great Joy; and were continually in the Temple praiſing and bleſſing God.* How does a Proſpect of Gain captivate the Covetous? How does the Fancy or Expectation of Pleaſure inflame the Voluptuary? How does the Sight of Vanity and Grandeur infect the Proud? And the Hope of Glory fire the Ambitious? What, hath the Beauty and Pleaſures of Holineſs no Attraction? Has Heaven no Charms in it? Has the Favour and Love of God, and of Jeſus, no Force no Power in them? Surely we have not the face to deny, but that the Promiſes of God are great and precious ones, and if they raiſe no Paſſion in us, it muſt not be through want of *Excellence*

and

and *Lovelineſs* in *them*, but want of *Faith* in *us*. And then judge you, how acceptable this kind of Infidelity muſt render us to God; What Value can God have for a People whom no Kindneſs can oblige, no Arguments convince; with whom no Miracles can gain Belief; no Aſſurances or Promiſes find Credit? Hell is the portion of the *fearful* and *unbeliever*, Rev. 21. 8. And what dreadful Judgments did overwhelm *Iſrael*, as often as they thus halted between God and Idols! It did not excuſe them that they had ſome ſort of *Veneration* for the Memory of *Moſes* and his *Miracles*; ſince this was not able to over-rule their *Prejudice* and *Superſtition*; that they retain ſome Honour for *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, and *Jacob*, and that *God*, which was the *Fear* of their *Fathers*, ſince they had as much, or more, for the *Nations* round about them, and their *Gods* too. And whatever Power they did acknowledge in the God of Heaven, or whatever Benefit they did own themſelves to have deriv'd from him, as I can hardly think, the Memory of either was utterly extinguiſh'd amongſt them; all this avail'd them nothing, while they made their Court to other Gods too, and put their Truſt in their Patronage and Protection. Though this be ſufficient to make us ſenſible of the Guilt of a Laodicean Vir-

tue, and an uncertain halting Faith, yet I muſt advance on, and obſerve unto you a worſe Principle, if worſe can be, of this Deportment yet, which is,

4. The Fourth Fountain of this Unſteadineſs and Remiſneſs in Religion is, ſome Remains of Corruption; the Prevalency of ſome vicious Paſſion or other. Mens Actions are the plaineſt Indications of their Affections. If the Life looks two ways, we need not doubt but that the Heart does ſo too. This was that made the young Man in the Goſpel fluctuate ſo between *Chriſt* and *Mammon*; this was the Caſe of *Herod*, he had yielded, no doubt, to the Power and Force of the *Baptiſt's Reaſons*, if he had not been drawn back by the Charms of his *Herodias*. And this is the Caſe of every Man who is but *almoſt* a Chriſtian; he is under the Aſcendent of ſome ſilly or vile Luſt or other; this is that which ſpoils the Taſte of the hidden *Manna*; and diminiſheth the Price of *Canaan*. Without doubt Men would apply themſelves more vigorouſly to ſpiritual Things were they not too fond of the Body and the Pleaſures of it; they would certainly ſeek the Kingdom of Heaven more earneſtly, and make a better proviſion than they do for the other World, were they not too much

much taken with this, and therefore too apt to ſet up their Reſt on this ſide *Jordan*. Now if this be ſo, What can we expect? They only who *conquer*, are *crowned*; they that *ſow* to the *fleſh* and to the *world*, can reap nothing from theſe but *Corruption*. Theſe kind of Chriſtians, though peradventure, they are not Slaves to any *infamous* and *ſcandalous* Luſts, are yet entangled by ſome other, not much leſs injurious, though not to *Reputation*, yet to *Purity of Heart*; they are captived to the World and Fleſh, though their Chains ſeem better poliſhed, and of a finer Metal; they cannot mount upwards, they cannot conquer, being retarded and kept under, if not by the *Strength* of *Temptation*, yet by their own *Softneſs* and *Weakneſs*; and yet, Why ſhould I doubt but theſe are conquered by Temptation? The more *innocent* the Object of any one's Paſſion is, generally the more *fatal*; becauſe we are the more apt to *indulge* our ſelves in it. The Cauſes of Lukewarmneſs being thus pointed out, 'tis evident what the Cure of it conſiſts in, namely, in forming juſt and correct Notions of Virtue and Vice; in ſtrengthening and confirming our Faith, and in perfecting and compleating our Reformation. I will now endeavour to poſſeſs the Minds of Men with an Averſion and Dread of

this State of Lukewarmneſs, by ſhewing,

1. The Folly.
2. The Guilt, and
3. The Danger of it.

1. The Folly. How reaſonably may I here addreſs my ſelf to the Lukewarm in the words of *Elijah* to the *Iſraelites*; *How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him*, 1 Kings 18. 21. If you do indeed believe, that your Safety and Happineſs depends upon God, then ſerve him in good earneſt; but if you think this depends upon the World, the Fleſh and the Devil, then ſerve theſe; if you really think that Virtue and Religion are the moſt ſolid and ſtable Treaſure, then ſtrive ſincerely and vigorouſly to poſſeſs your ſelves of them; but if you really think, that the Eaſe and Pleaſure of the Body, Reſpect, and Pomp, and State, is the proper Portion, and ſovereign Good of Man, then devote and offer up your ſelves to theſe. For what a Folly is that Life, which will neither procure us the Happineſs of this World, nor of another? To what purpoſe is it to liſten only ſo much to Conſcience, as to damp and chill our Pleaſure; and ſo much to Pleaſure, as

to

to diſturb the Peace and Repoſe of Conſcience? But indeed, as the Words of *Elijah* were rather an *Irony* than any real Doubt, whether *Baal* or the Lord were God; rather a ſcornful Deriſion of their Folly and Stupidity, than a ſerious Exhortation to deliberate, whether Idolatry or the Worſhip of the True God, were to be choſen: I doubt not, but mine will ſeem to you to carry no other Sound in them. The Diſparity is ſo vaſt between God and the World, between Religion and Senſuality, Covetouſneſs and Ambition; between thoſe Hopes and Enjoyments, we may reap from the one, and thoſe we can fancy in the other; that there is no place for doubting what Choice we are to make, or to which Side we are to adhere; nay, in this we are more criminal than the *Iſraelites*, being ſelf-condemn'd. The *Iſraelites* indeed, ſeem to be at a loſs, whether the Lord or *Baal* were God; they doubted under whoſe Protection they might thrive beſt. But at this day, whoever believes a God, knows very well there is none beſides him. Whatever paſſion we have for the World, and the Things of it; whatever ſpiritual Idolatry we are guilty of, our Opinions are not yet ſo far corrupted, as to attribute to them, in Reality, any thing like Divinity. Whilſt we dote on Wealth,

we at the ſame time know that it makes its ſelf Wings and flies away; whilſt on Greatneſs and Power, we know that 'tis but a piece of empty and toilſome Pageantry, and often the Subject of Miſery and diſmal Tragedies, not incident to a lower State; whilſt we dote on Pleaſure, we are well aſſur'd that 'tis diſhonourable and ſhort, and intermix'd with Fears, and Shame, and Torment; we know that nothing here below is able to free our State and Fortune from Calamity, our Mind from Guilt, the Body from Death, much leſs the whole Man from a Miſerable Eternity. In one word, we know that what we admire is Vanity, and what we worſhip is indeed an Idol. This being ſo, I will inſiſt no longer on this Topick; for ſince the World bears no Competition with God in our Opinion, though it often rival him in our Affections, we are not to impute the halting of a Laodicean Chriſtian to any Perſuaſion of Omnipotence or Allſufficiency, or any thing like Divinity in the things he dotes on, ſerves, and worſhips; but we muſt find out ſome other Reaſon of it. And that is generally this, We are willing to believe, that our Fondneſs for the World, and our Indulgence to the Body, is conſiſtent enough with Religion; that it is no Violation of our Faith, nor Provocation

cation to God; nor conſequently, Prejudice to our Eternal Intereſt; and then 'tis no wonder if we blend and compound Religion and Senſuality; and ſtand divided in our Affections; and conſequently halt in our Service between God and the World. To prevent this I will ſhew,

2. That this is a great *Sin*; which is ſufficiently evident from this ſingle Conſideration, That it fruſtrates the Efficacy of the Goſpel and the Spirit, and entirely defeats the great Deſign of the Chriſtian Religion. For, 1. Religion has no effectual Influence upon the Lukewarm himſelf; the Goſpel works no thorough Change in him. The Sinner is not converted into a Saint; nor Human Nature perfected by Participation of a Divine one. 2. The Laodiceans can never offer up to God any Gift, any Sacrifice worthy of him; nor render him any Service acceptable to him; the *Kingdom of God is righteouſneſs, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghoſt*, Rom. 14. *He that in theſe things ſerveth Chriſt, is acceptable to God, and approved of Men.* But alas! Theſe Men are almoſt utter ſtrangers to theſe things, a few faint, and irreſolute Wiſhes, formal and cuſtomary Prayers, nigardly and grumbling Alms, and an Attendance upon God's Word, rather out of Spiritual Wan-

tonneſs, than Devotion, theſe are the Offerings they can make God; And will God be better pleaſed with theſe, than he was with thoſe of *Iſrael* that were deformed with Maims and Blemiſhes? *Mal.* 1. 8. *Offer now theſe to thy governor; will he be pleaſed with thee, or accept of thy perſon? ſaith the Lord of hoſts.* The *Magi* indeed, left their Country, and Offered *Gold, Frankincenſe and Myrrh to our Saviour*, Matt. 2. *David* would *not Sacrifice to God of that which coſt him nothing*, 2 Sam. 24. 24. The Primitive Chriſtians offered up to God, Prayers and Tears, Labours and Travels; nay their Honours, their Fortunes, their Lives, their Blood. But alas, What have theſe men to offer? They have not Love enough to put them upon any Expence, nor Faith enough to put them upon any Hardſhips, for the ſake of God and Virtue. *For though they think themſelves rich and increaſed in goods and to have need of nothing, yet* are they poor, wretched, and miſerable, and blind, and naked, *Rev.* 3. 17. And ſhall theſe receive a Crown of Righteouſneſs? Shall theſe ſhare in the Kingdom of Jeſus? Shall theſe partake in the Triumph of the Laſt Day? It can never be; they do nothing worthy of the Goſpel, nothing worthy of the Spirit of God; nothing that can entitle them to the Benefit of the Croſs of Chriſt.

3. The

3. The Life of the Laodicean Chriſtian will never do any credit to Religion, or reflect any Honour on the Goſpel. No Man will be ever able to diſcern the Beauty of Holineſs, or the Power and Efficacy of Divine Truths, from the Practice and Converſation of ſuch an one. Ah! had the Carriage of the Primitive Times been ſuch as his, I know not what *Miracles* might have done, I am ſure *Examples* would never have made many Proſelytes. But the Chriſtians then acted thoſe Virtues, which the *Pagan* only pretended to; and Faith in Jeſus atchiev'd thoſe Victories over the World, which the *Jews* (ſo debauch'd and ſtupid were they grown) did in the Declenſion of that State neither underſtand nor pretend to: This was that which made the World admire and love Chriſtianity. After thus much ſaid of the Effects of this ſort of Carriage; I need ſcarcely put any one in mind, what will be the laſt and ſaddeſt Effect of it; for if our Chriſtianity be ſuch, that it neither truly ſets us free from our Bondage to the World and Fleſh; nor enrich our Soul with true and ſolid Virtues; if it neither promote the Honour of God, nor the Good of Man, it muſt unavoidably follow, that having no true Title to God's Favour,

vour, nor any rational Ground, on which to build an Aſſurance of it, we can reap no true Comfort or Pleaſure from Religion here, nor any Reward from it hereafter. Alas! What talk I of Comfort and Reward? *Diſtreſs and Anguiſh muſt take hold of the Sinners in Sion; and Fearfulneſs muſt ſurprize the Hypocrite:* And from the Troubles and Miſeries of *this* Life, they muſt go down into the Everlaſting Torments of *another*. The Scripture is plain; God will ſpue them out of his Mouth, as he did the *Laodicean*: He will ſhut the *Gate* of *Heaven* againſt them, as againſt the *fooliſh Virgins* that had no *Oyl* in their *Lamps*: And their Hell will have one Torment in it, which is incident to no others, that they had once the Hopes of Heaven; and it is no ſmall Aggravation of Miſery to fall into it, even from the Expectation of Happineſs.

This is not, as I obſerved above, to be apply'd to accidental Dulneſs or Deadneſs in Duty; nor are the Decays or Abatements of Love, which Good men ſometimes ſuffer, immediately to be pronounced damnable. But yet *theſe* are to be put in mind of the Danger they are in; and recall'd to their former Zeal, in the Words of the Spirit to the Church of *Epheſus*;

Epheſus; Nevertheleſs, I have ſomewhat againſt thee, becauſe thou haſt left thy firſt Love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen; and repent, and do the firſt Works; or elſe I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy Candleſtick out of his place, except thou repent, Rev. 2. 4, 5.

CHAP. IX.

Of Zeal. *Or the Firſt thing to be conſider'd in a State of* Zeal; *namely, What Holineſs or Righteouſneſs the Perfect Man may be ſuppoſed to have arrived at.*

I Am arriv'd at the *laſt Stage* of *Perfection*, which I chuſe to call a State of *Zeal*; not only becauſe the *Scripture* ſeems to direct me to this Expreſſion, but alſo becauſe it ſeems to me more full and proper than others, that *may* be, or *are* made uſe of, for the ſame End. A State of *Union* is an Expreſſion that better ſuits *another* Life than *this*. For the Leſſon the *Perfect* Man is ever and anon to revolve in his Mind is, That the preſent Life is a Life of Labour, and Travel, and Sufferings;

ings; the future one, of Rewards, and Crowns, and Enjoyments. Then as to that other Expreſſion, The State of *Love*, it ſuits my purpoſe well enough; but does not come up ſo juſtly and exactly to it, as the State of *Zeal*; for I take *Zeal* to be *Love*, in the utmoſt Elevation and Vivacity that it is capable of.

And now, what a noble, what a fruitful *Argument* am I entring upon? Methinks I feel my Soul grow *warm*, and *enkindle* upon my approaching it; and my firſt Views or Contemplations of it, inſpire me with Deſires of the ſame nature with it ſelf. I am concern'd to ſee my ſelf confin'd and limited by the Laws of *Method*; and find my ſelf inclin'd to wiſh, That I were now to write, rather a juſt *Volume*, than a few *Pages*. Here the Heroick *Acts*, or what is more, the Heroick *Lives* of Saints, Martyrs, and Confeſſors, preſent themſelves to my Thoughts: Here *Human* Nature, enriched, adorned, and elevated to the utmoſt Degree, by a Participation of the *Divine* one; Here the Power of *God's Word*, the Energy of the *Holy Ghoſt*, the Triumphs of *Faith*, and the Extaſies of *Love*, would be deſcribed; Here the different Excellencies of different *Virtues*, and the different Value of *good Works* ſhould be ſtated and ſetled, and the various

various Paths, in which Men purſue the *Heights* of Virtue, and the nobleſt Deſigns be examin'd, and ſolid Piety and true Wiſdom be refin'd from the Alloys and Mixtures of Enthuſiaſm, Superſtition, Fancy, or whatever elſe they are diſfigur'd and debas'd by. But this cannot *now* be done, and it may be it could not at all be done by *me*: No Meaſure of the *Spirit*, peradventure, below that with which the *Apoſtles* were inſpir'd, is ſufficient to treat this Argument as it requires. Beſides, according to my Capacity, I have been all along making this Point. When, in the *Firſt* Section, I ſtated the *Notion* of *Perfection*, ſhew'd by what *Steps* we advanced to it, what *Means* we are to make uſe of, and what would be the *Fruit* of it, I did in Effect deſcribe to my Reader, the State of *Zeal*, and mark'd out the Path that leads to it. When, in the *Second*, I labour to eſtabliſh the true *Liberty* of Man, upon the Overthrow and Extirpation not only of *Mortal Sin*, and of *Idleneſs* and *Lukewarmneſs*, but alſo, as far as it might be, even of *Sin of Infirmity*, and *Original Corruption*; what elſe was I doing, but proſecuting this one Deſign, namely, the implanting and propagating in the World the State of *Zeal*? However, ſomething there ſeems to me yet wanting, to *compleat* my Undertaking;

and

and *that* I am to endeavour now. To which End I will here discourse of Three Things.

1. What it is in general I mean by *Zeal*.

2. What is that *Perfection* of *Holiness* or *Righteousness*, wherein it consists. And

3. Of the *Efficacy* or *Force* of this *Holiness*, as it exerts it self in *good Works*. Of these, the *two Former* shall be the Argument of *this*; the *Third* of the *following* Chapter.

§. 1. Of *Zeal* in *General*, what it is. I do not exclude some Degrees of *Zeal*, from every Period of the Christian's Life; Sincerity cannot subsist wholly without it. *The Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness*, which is the Subject of one of our Saviour's *Beatitudes*, must be more or less in every Child of God. But it may signify one thing in the *Infant*, another in the *Adult* Christian; in the one, the Conquest of Sin, or rather of the Reliques and Remains of former sinful Habits; and the Attainment of habitual Goodness, is the *Object* of this *Hunger and Thirst*: In the other, it imports a vehement Desire of whatever is yet wanting to a further Accom-

compliſhment and Conſummation of Righteouſneſs *already* fixt and eſtabliſh'd; the entire and ultimate Perfection of it in *Heaven*; and in the *mean* Time, the promoting the Divine Glory upon *Earth*, whatever it coſt him to do ſo. By a State of *Zeal* then, I here mean Virtue or Holineſs, not in the Bud, or in the Bloſſom, but in its full Strength and Stature, grown up, and ripe, and loaded with bleſſed Fruits: I mean *that* Holineſs that is the Reſult of Illumination, or Clearneſs of Judgment, of the Strength and Force of Holy Reſolution, and the Vigour and Energy of Holy Paſſions. In a word, I mean that ſolid, ſpiritual, and operative Religion, which may be felt and enjoy'd by us our ſelves, in the Serenity and Tranquility of Conſcience, the Longings and Breathings of Pious Deſires, the Joys and Pleaſures of a Rational Aſſurance; diſcern'd by the World, in our Lives and Actions, in the Modeſty of our Garb, in the Plainneſs and Humility of all things elſe, that pertain to the *Port* of Life; in the Temperance of our Meals, the Purity and Heavenlineſs of Converſation, the Moderation of our Deſigns and Enjoyments, the Inſtruction of our Families; with a tender and undefatigable Watchfulneſs over them; the Conſtancy of our Attend-

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ance *upon*, and the Devoutneſs of our Deportment *in*, the Publick Worſhip of God; and finally, in the Activity and Generoſity of our Charity; Or, to ſpeak my Thoughts in the Language of St. *Paul*, A State of *Zeal*, is that Perfection or Maturity of Holineſs, which abounds in *the Works of Faith*, *the Labour of Love*, *and the Patience of Hope*, *in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, *in the ſight of God*, *and our Father*, 1 Theſſ. 1. 3. Now the end of all this is, the advancing the Glory of God: And therefore *Zeal* is well enough deſcrib'd, or defin'd by an ardent or vehement Deſire of doing ſo. Now this is advanced two Ways: *Firſt*, by our *Perſonal* and *Inherent Holineſs*: And, *Secondly*, by the Fruit of it, *good Works*. Of both which, I will now ſpeak a little more particularly.

§. 2. Of that *Perfection* of *Holineſs* which conſtitutes the State of *Zeal*. Here I will Enquire into *two* Things.

1. Whether the *Perfect* Man muſt be poſſeſſed of *all* the Treaſures of Goodneſs; Whether he muſt be adorned by a Confluence, and an Accumulation of *all* Virtues.

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2. What *Height* of Virtue, what *Degree* of Holineſs, he may be ſuppoſed to arrive at.

1. Of the *Extent* of Righteouſneſs. It is generally thought, that Univerſality is as eſſential and neceſſary a Property of Goſpel Righteouſneſs, as Sincerity and Perſeverance: That there is an inſeparable Connexion and Union, between *all* Chriſtian Virtues; ſo that he who wants *any*, muſt be concluded to have *none*: This *want* being, not like a Blemiſh that diminiſhes the Beauty, or a Maim that weakens the Strength; but like a Wound that diſſolves the Frame and Contexture of the Natural Body. This Opinion is partly built upon *Reaſon*, which tells us, That there is a native Luſtre and Beauty in all Virtues; and therefore there is no one in the whole Syſteme of Morality but muſt be lovely and amiable to a good man. Partly upon *Scripture*, in which we find the Chriſtian repreſented, *as holy in all manner of Converſation*, 1 Pet. 1. 15. *Perfect in every good work*, Heb. 13. 21. *As fill'd with all the Fulneſs of God*, Eph. 3. 19. *As fruitful in every good work*, Col. 1. 10. and exhorted in the moſt comprehenſive Terms imaginable, to the Practice of *every* Virtue. *Finally, Brethren, whatſoever things*

are true, whatſoever things are honeſt, whatſoever things are juſt, whatſoever things are pure, whatſoever things are lovely, whatſoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praiſe, think on theſe things. To which may be added numerous Texts, importing, That Faith is a Principle of *Univerſal* Righteouſneſs; and That the Fear and Love of God, do equally oblige us to *all* his Commandments; and That the Violation of *one*, involves us in the Guilt of *all*. And the reſult of all this ſeems to be plainly this, That the whole *Chain* of Graces is diſſolved and loſt, if there be but one *Link* wanting. But at this rate, as the *Sincere* Man muſt be endow'd with *all* manner of Virtues, ſo muſt the *Perfect excel* in *all*: But the one and the other Aſſertion, if we conſider things cloſely, ſeems to have in them inſuperable Difficulties. There is a vaſt *Variety* in the Natures of Men, in the States and Conditions of Life, and in the Kinds and Degrees, as well of the Sanctifying, as of the Miraculous Gifts of God. St. *Paul* tells us, *Every Man has his proper Gift of God*, 1 Cor. 7. 7. From whence it ſeems naturally to be inferr'd, That every Man is not capable of attaining to an Excellence and Eminence in *every* Virtue. Experience tells us, That there are different kinds of

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Natures, as well as *Soils*; and that ſome kinds of *Virtues*, like ſome kinds of *Seed*, will thrive better in *one* than in *another*. Nor does *Grace* alter the Matter much; ſince it generally accommodates it ſelf to *Nature*. Laſtly, it ſeems very hard, That every Man ſhould have the Virtues of all Men, of all States, of all Capacities; every particular Member, the Virtues of the whole Church; the Beauty and Strength of the Church, as well as of the natural Body, or Commonwealth, conſiſting, not in the All-ſufficiency of every Member, but in that Variety of Gifts and Graces, that cements and unites, enriches and ſupports the whole. To come up to Matter of *Fact*; I read of the *Faith* of *Abraham*, the *Meekneſs* of *Moſes*, the *Patience* of *Job*, the *Love* of *Mary Magdalen*, the *Zeal* of St. *Peter*, and the *Labours* and *Travels* of St. *Paul*; which Firmneſs and Conſtancy is too mean a Name for. Theſe Virtues ſeem therefore, to have been the *peculiar* Excellencies of theſe Perſons; and to have ſhone in *them* with more tranſcendent Luſtre, than any *other*: Theſe ſeem to have been the Virtues, for which Grace and Nature eminently qualified them; and to which the Providence of God more immediately and directly called them. All this conſider'd, ſeems it not enough to come up to the

Perfection of *these* great Men? May it not ſuffice to excel in theſe Virtues, which Nature, Grace, and Providence preſcrib'd? May not the *Perfect* be allow'd to want, what he does not need? Would one not think, that, in many Reſpects, it were enough for him to be free from this or that Vice, rather than to expect that he ſhould be adorn'd with this or that Virtue, which he has no uſe for? Eſpecially, if by Virtue, we underſtand ſtrictly, ſuch a Habit as enables us to act eaſily and delightfully. To adjuſt this Matter;

1. The *Perfect* Man muſt, as I have proved before, not only be ſet free from the Dominion of Sin, but alſo abſtain even from a ſingle Act of preſumptuous Wickedneſs: He muſt neither Criminally *omit* a Duty, nor Deliberately *commit* any thing repugnant to it.

2*ly*, He muſt be endowed with Spiritual Wiſdom and Underſtanding, with Faith, Hope, Charity, with the Graces which I will call *Univerſal*, becauſe neceſſary and indiſpenſable to all as Chriſtians, abſtracting from their particular Capacities and Relations; and *that* too, in an *eminent* Degree, ſo as to be *ſtrong in the Grace which is in Chriſt Jeſus*, 2 Tim. 2. 1. This will render him *holy in all manner of Con-*

Converſation; *and thoroughly furniſh'd to all good Works.* Theſe two things conſtitute *Univerſal* Righteouſneſs, compleat the *Perfect* Man, and fully ſatisfy the Texts alledg'd. Or if *not*, what follows *will.*

3*ly*, He muſt excel in thoſe Virtues which are moſt *Natural.* I call thoſe Virtues *Natural*, to which Grace and Nature moſt powerfully diſpoſe and incline him; for *theſe* he ſeems to be deſign'd by God; theſe will ſoon grow up to Maturity; and much will be their Fruit, and great their Beauty. I do not all this while ſuppoſe, that the *Perfect* Man ought not ſo far to ſubdue and rectify his Temper, as not only to overcome the Sin of his *Conſtitution*, but in ſome Degrees poſſeſs the Virtue that is moſt repugnant to it. But to expect him to be eminent *here*, is, I doubt, too hard and unreaſonable. For *here*, when he has beſtowed much Pains and Travel, much Care and Coſt, his Progreſs may not be ſo much, as where he beſtowed *leaſt.* But here I muſt add *two* Cautions; the *one* is, That no Man miſtake contracted *Habits* for *Nature*, and then conclude, that it will be impoſſible for him to attain the *Perfection* of this or that Virtue, through a natural Incapacity. In the next place, let no Man ſatisfy and

content himſelf, in a weak and imperfect State of *that* Virtue, which is directly oppoſed to the Sin of his *Conſtitution*; but let him think, that *here*, if any where, his Virtue muſt be always *growing*; and let him not doubt, but that our Saviour's Promiſe, as far as it can be accompliſh'd on Earth, belongs to his ſincere Endeavours here; *Bleſſed are they that hunger and thirſt after Righteouſneſs; for they ſhall be filled*, Matth. 5. 6.

4. The *Perfect* Man muſt be eminent in thoſe Virtues, which are moſt *Neceſſary*: ſuch are thoſe which his particular Station and Calling, or any other Diſpenſation of Providence he is under, requires of him. Whatever Virtues may be more *delightful*, theſe are more *important*; others may be more *natural*, theſe have more of *Uſe* and more of *Merit*. A Man may fall ſhort of *Perfection* in others, without either *Diſparagement* or *Guilt*; but Deficiency in theſe, can hardly eſcape *both*. Beſides, every thing is lovely in its *place*, and in its *time*. There is a *peculiar* Grace and Luſtre, that attends the Virtues of a Man's *Station*, that is ſcarcely to be found in any other. I would, therefore, have my *Perfect* Man, truly great in his *own* Buſineſs; and ſhine with a dazling Luſtre in his *own* Sphere.

Sphere. To this purpoſe, ſurely, ſpeaks the Advice of St. *Paul*, *Rom.* 12. 6, 7, 8. *Having then Gifts, differing according to the Grace that is given to us, whether Prophecy, let us Prophecy according to the proportion of Faith: Or miniſtry, let us wait on our miniſtring: Or he that teacheth, on teaching: Or he that exhorteth, on Exhortation: He that giveth, let him do it with Simplicity: He that ruleth, with Diligence: He that ſheweth Mercy, with Chearfulneſs.*

5. Laſtly, As there is a different *Guilt* in Sins, ſo there is different *Merit* in Virtues: As amongſt Miraculous, ſo amongſt ſanctifying Gifts, ſome are more *excellent* than others; and he is the *moſt Perfect Man*, who is enrich'd with the *moſt Perfect Gifts*. The three Heroick Virtues of the Goſpel are, *Faith*, *Love*, *Humility*. Nor do I preſumptuouſly, contrary to the Apoſtle, exclude *Hope*; but comprehend it under *Faith*. Of *Faith* I have often had occaſion to ſpeak. *Humility* will make the *laſt* Chapter of *this* Section; and therefore, I will only exhort to *Love*. *Love* is the nobleſt Fruit of Illumination and Faith, the true Source and Parent of Joy and Peace. *Love* is the moſt pregnant Seed of a Divine Life; 'tis the Principle that animates, moves, and forms the whole

Body of Righteouſneſs: *Love* is the bond of Union, and *Communion with the Father and his Son Jeſus* through the *Spirit*. And 'tis but fit, that what renders us moſt *like* God, ſhould render us moſt *dear* to him too: And this *Love* does; *for God is Love*. In ſhort, *Love is the fulfilling of the Law*; 'tis the Beauty and Perfection of a Diſciple of Jeſus; and the great Subject of Praiſe and Glory in the Day of Judgment. *Love* is the laſt Round in the Scale of *Perfection*; and therefore my *Perfect* Man muſt abound in this. What Degrees of *Love*, *of Deſire*, or *Complacency* for the things of this *preſent* Life, may conſiſt with Sincerity; what with *Perfection*, may be eaſily learnt from ſeveral parts of this Work. There is no doubt but the *Perfect* Man muſt *love God* to that *Degree*, that he muſt always cleave to him; walk as always before Him; ever meditate and contemplate on Him and his Works; contrive and ſtudy, labour and contend to pleaſe Him: It muſt be an Affliction to him to be divided from Him but for a little while; and he muſt ever and anon, by Day and Night, break out into his Praiſes, and rejoyce and Glory in him. 2. He muſt love God to that Degree, as that all things, in Compariſon of Him, muſt appear blaſted and wither'd,

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empty and contemptible, without Pleaſure, without Beauty: And conſequently, he muſt ſo thirſt after the *Beatifick Viſion*, after the Preſence and Fruition of God, that he muſt earneſtly *deſire to be diſſolv'd*, and pant, and long to be diſmiſſed from the *Pilgrimage* of this *World*, and from the corruptible *Tabernacle* of the *Body*. Nor do I, Laſtly, doubt, but that this *Love* is often ſenſibly *tranſporting*: 'Tis a fire within, that ſtrives to break out, and exert it ſelf in the Fruitions of Heaven: 'Tis a rich and mighty Cordial, that raiſes Nature above it ſelf, and makes it all Purity, all Glory.

Thus have I conſider'd the *Extent* or Compaſs of the *Perfect* Man's *Virtues*. And the *Sum total* is: In ſome he muſt excel, becauſe Natural and Eaſy; in others, becauſe neceſſary. Univerſal ones he *cannot* want; they are eſſential to Chriſtianity; others of a peculiar Nature he *may*, unleſs his Circumſtances exact them: Nor is this any Diminution of his *Perfection*. Patience, Fortitude, Moderation, Vigilance, *&c.* are the Virtues of Earth, not Heaven; and yet, none think, the bleſſed Inhabitants of that Place Imperfect, becauſe not endow'd with Habits which they do not want. Above all, he that will be

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Perfect, muſt abound in thoſe Graces, which are of the moſt *Heroick* Nature; Faith, Love, and Humility: For theſe are they, which moſt effectually exalt Man above *himſelf*, and above the *World*; which inflame him with a *Zeal* for the Honour of God, and the Good of Man; and enable him to ſurmount the Difficulties, which he meets with, in proſecuting this Glorious Deſign. I am next to Enquire,

§. 2. To what *Height*, to what *Degrees* of Virtue, the *Perfect* Man may advance. I have in part anticipated this Enquiry already; yet cannot forbear adding here *two* Obſervations. *Firſt*, That Reaſon and Scripture ſeem to preſs us on towards an endleſs Progreſs in Virtue. And yet, *Secondly*, That both ſeem to propoſe to us, ſuch a *State* of *Perfection* as attainable, beyond which, we cannot go; that ſo the *Beginner* may not *deſpair* of Perfection, nor the *Perfect abate* any thing of their Vigilance, and their Induſtry. Such a Degree of Excellence, to which nothing can be added; ſuch a Height, above which, there is no room to ſoar, if apply'd to Man, and this World is ſurely but an Imaginary Notion. To dream of *ſuch* a *Perfection*, were to forget our Nature, and our

our State: No Sagacity of Judgment, no Strength of Reſolution, no Felicity of Circumſtances, can ever advance us to *this* Height. Such a *Perfection* as this, that is incapable of any Increaſe, belongs, I believe, to *God* alone: Or if we may allow it to *Angels*, we muſt certainly deny it to *Man*: In *whom*, one would think, the Appetites of the Body can never be ſo intirely ſubdued, that there ſhould be no place to extend his Conqueſt, or render his Victory more intire and compleat: And in *whom*, one would think, the Spirit of God ſhould never reſide in that Meaſure, that there ſhould be nothing to be added to his Fulneſs. 'Tis hard to conceive, how we ſhould ſtudy the Syſteme of Divine Faith, how we ſhould daily reflect upon our Lives and Actions, without *growing* in ſpiritual Wiſdom and Underſtanding; 'Tis hard to conceive, how we ſhould give God, the World, and our ſelves, repeated Proofs of our Integrity in the day of Trial, without *increaſing* our Strength and Aſſurance: And Love muſt naturally increaſe with theſe. Whence it is, that St. *Paul*, acknowledging himſelf not yet *Perfect*, reſolves, *that forgetting thoſe things that are behind, and reaching forwards to thoſe things that are before, he would preſs on towards the Mark, for the prize*

prize of the high Calling of God, in Chriſt Jeſus, Phil. 3. 13, 14. And St. *Auſtin* reſolves, *Pleniſſima Charitas, quamdiu hic homo vivit, in Nemine eſt*; *an abſolute Plenitude of Charity is in no Mortal upon Earth.*

And yet, if we come to *Fact* and *Practice*, one would be tempted to think, that the *Diſciples* of our Lord and Maſter, had arrived at that State, wherein their buſineſs was not to climb higher, but rather to make good the Ground they had gain'd. What could render St. *Paul*'s Victory over the Body more compleat, who aſſures us, *I am crucified with Chriſt?* And again, *I am crucified to the World, and the World is crucified to me?* What could render the Authority and Dominion of *his* Mind more abſolute, or its Graces more conſummate and intire? Who could ſay with Truth, *'Tis not I who live, but Chriſt who lives in me.* What would you have *added* to that Faith, and Love, which made *him* ready, *not only to be bound, but to die at Jeruſalem*, which made *him long to be diſſolved and to be with Chriſt?* As to *thoſe* words of *his*, Phil. 3. 13. *forgetting thoſe things that are behind, and reaching forwards*, &c. *they* relate to his Tryals and Performances, to his Perils and Conflicts; not to his Attainments: He does not here deny

deny himſelf to be *Perfect*, though that might well enough have become his Modeſty and Humility; but only, that he was not to look upon himſelf as already at his Goal, a Conqueror and Crown'd; there being much yet behind to do and ſuffer, notwithſtanding all that he had paſſed through. This is the Senſe of his οὐχ ὅτι ἤδη τετελείωμαι, which we render, *not as though I were already perfect.* As to St. *Auſtin*, I am wholly of his Mind; for he ſpeaks *Comparatively*, and does in effect no more than affirm, That no Man living is as *Perfect* in *this* World, as he will be in *another*, which no Man ſure can ever doubt. —— If we conſult *Reaſon*, will it not be apt to tell us, That as every *Being* has its *Bounds* ſet it, ſo has every *Perfection* too? That there is a *Stature*, as of the *Natural*, ſo of the *Spiritual* Man, beyond which it cannot grow? That as to *Grace*, no more can be infuſed, than our *Natures* are capable of? Otherwiſe, like too rich a Cordial, it will not ſtrengthen, but fire our Natures; or like too dazling a Light, it will not aſſiſt, but oppreſs our Faculties. And does not the *Parable* of our *Maſter* countenance this, *Matth.* 25. 2. wherein he tells us, That God gave to one five Talents, to another two, to another one, to every Man according

cording to his *Ability*. By which one would think our Lord inſinuates, That the Meaſures of *Grace* are uſually diſtributed in *Proportion* to the Capacities of *Nature*; and that *he* who improved his *two* Talents into *four*, arriv'd at his proper *Perfection*, as well as *he*, who improv'd his *five* into *ten*; it being as abſurd to expect, That the *Perfection* of every Man ſhould be the ſame, as to expect, that all Mens *Bodies* ſhould be of the ſame Height, or their *Minds* of the ſame Capacity.

Reflecting on all this together, I cannot but be of Opinion, That ſome have actually arriv'd at *that* ſtrength of Faith, at *that* ardour of Love, that they ſeemed to have been uncapable of any conſiderable *Acceſſions* in *this* Life. But yet, new occaſions may ſtill demand new Virtues; which were indeed before contained and included in Faith, and Love; but no otherwiſe, than as Fruits and Trees are in their Seeds. And ſome Degree of Original Corruption may ſtill be lurking in the moſt ſanctified Nature; and ſome Venial Defects and Imperfections or other, may ſtill leave room, for the greateſt of Saints to extend his Conqueſt. Beſides, 'tis hard to determine or fix the Bounds of Knowledge; and every new Degree of Light ſeems to make way for more. So that after all, nothing hinders,

hinders, but that the *Path of the Perfect Man*, may, as well with reſpect to his *Righteouſneſs* as his *Fortunes*, be *like the ſhining Light, which ſhineth more and more unto the Perfect day*; I mean, the Day of a bleſſed Eternity.

The *Motives* to *Perfection*, the *Fruit* of it, the *Means* and *Methods* of attaining it, laid down in the *Firſt* Section, will all ſerve here: Therefore I have nothing to offer of *this* ſort; only, if I forgot to pay that Deference to the *Inſtitutions* of *our Church*, which they juſtly deſerve, I do it *now*: And do earneſtly perſuade my *Reader*, to a ſtrict Obſervance of them. I do not only think *this* neceſſary to maintain a *Face* of *Religion* amongſt us, but alſo highly conducive to true *Perfection*. I am fully ſatisfied, That there is a *peculiar* Preſence of God in his *publick* Ordinances; That the Devotion of good Men does mutually enflame and enkindle one another; That there is an holy Awe and Reverence ſeizes the Minds of good Men, when they draw near to God in publick Worſhip; and finally, That if the *Offices* of our *Liturgy* do not affect our *Hearts*, 'tis becauſe *they* are very much indiſpoſed, and very poorly qualified for the true and ſpiritual Worſhip of God.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

Of Zeal, *as it conſiſts in* Good Works.

AND now, let not any one think, that I have taken Pains to advance the Illumination of a Sinner, to knock off his Chains and Fetters, to raiſe him as far as might be above the Corruption of Nature, and the Defects and Infirmities of Life; to ſcatter thoſe lazy Fogs and Miſts which hung upon his Spirits, and to enrich him with Heroick Virtues; let no man, I ſay, fancy, that I have laboured to do all *this*, that after all, my *Perfect Man* might *ſit down* like an *Epicurean God*, and enjoy himſelf; might talk finely of Solitary Shades and Gardens, and ſpend a precious Life, fitted for the nobleſt Deſigns, in a ſluggiſh Retirement. No, no; as *Virtue* is the Perfection of Human Life, ſo is *Action* the Perfection of *Virtue*: And *Zeal* is that Principle of *Action*, which I require in a Saint of God. Accordingly, the Scriptures deſcribe this great, this happy Man, as, *full of the Holy Ghoſt*, *fervent in Spirit*, *zealous of good Works*. Such a one was *Moſes*, *mighty in Word and Deed*, as

as well as *learned in all the knowledge of the Egyptians*; Such an one was St. *Stephen*, as full of a Divine Ardour and irresistible Fervency of Spirit, as of an irresistible Wisdom; and such an one was the excellent *Cornelius*, *a devout Man*, one that had transfus'd and deriv'd the fear of God from his own Bosom, throughout his Family, and Relations, and Friends too; *one that gave much alms, and prayed to God always.* What need I multiply Instances? This is that which distinguishes the *Perfect* Man from all others; the Victories of Faith, the Labours of Charity, the Constancy and Patience of Hope, and the Ardors of Devotion.

Need I here distinguish a *Zeal* of God, from the Fierceness of Faction, the Cruelty of Superstition, from the wakeful and indefatigable Activity of Avarice and Ambition, from the unruly Heats of Pride and Passion, and from the implacable Fury of Revenge? It needs not; no foolish, no false, fantastick, earthly, or deviliſh Principle can counterfeit a Divine *Zeal*. 'Tis a Perfection that shines with such a peculiar Lustre, with such an Heavenly Majesty and Sweetness, that nothing else can imitate it; 'tis always pursuing Good, the Honour of God, and the Happiness of Man: It *contends earnestly for the Faith once*

delivered to the Saints; but it contends as earneſtly too, to root out Wickedneſs, and implant the Righteouſneſs of the Goſpel in the World. It is not eager for the *Articles* of a *Sect* or *Party*, and unconcern'd for *Catholick* ones. When it preſſes for *Reformation* it begins *at home*, and ſets a bright *Example* of what it would recommend to others. 'Tis meek and gentle under its *own* Affronts, but warm and bold againſt *thoſe* which are offer'd to *God*. In a word, though Love fill its *Sails*, Divine Wiſdom and Prudence give it *Ballaſt*; and it has no Heat, but what is tempered and refracted by Charity and Humility.

Need I in the *next* place fix or ſtate the various *Degrees* of *Zeal*? Alas! it is not requiſite; *Zeal* being nothing elſe but an ardent Thirſt of promoting the Divine Glory by the *beſt Works*. 'Tis plain, the more excellent the *Work*, and the more it coſt, the more Perfect, the more exalted the *Zeal* that performs it. When like *Mary*, we quit the Cumber and Diſtraction of this World, and chuſe Religion for our Portion, then do we love it in good earneſt. When with the *Diſciples* we can ſay, *Lord, we have forſaken all and followed thee, or are ready to do ſo*; when we are continually bleſſing and praiſing God; when, if the Neceſſities of Chriſt's Church require it,

it, we are ready to call *nothing our own*; when we are prepared, if the Will of God be ſo, to *reſiſt even unto Blood*; when nothing is dear, nothing delightful to us but God and Holineſs; *then* have we reached the *Height* of *Zeal*. In a word, *Zeal* is nothing elſe but the *Love of God* made *Perfect* in us. And if we would ſee it drawn to the Life, we muſt Contemplate it in the Bleſſed *Jeſus*, who is the Perfect Pattern of Heroick Love. How *boundleſs* was *his Love*, when the whole *World*, and how *tranſcendent* when a *World of Enemies*, was the Object of it! How indefatigable was *his Zeal!* How Wakeful! How Meek! How Humble! How Firm and Reſolv'd! His Labours and Travels, his Self-denial, Prayers and Tears, his Silence and Patience, his Agony and Blood, and charitable Prayers poured out with it for his Perſecutors, inſtruct us fully, what Divine *Love*, what Divine *Zeal* is. And now, even at this time, *Love* reigns in *him* as *he* reigns in *Heaven*: *Love* is ſtill the predominant, the darling Paſſion of *his* Soul. Worthy art thou, O Jeſus! to receive Honour, and Glory, and Dominion! worthy art thou to Sit down with thy Father on his Throne! worthy art thou to Judge the World, becauſe thou haſt *loved*, becauſe thou haſt been *zealous* unto Death,

becauſe thou haſt *overcome!* Some there are, indeed, who have *followed* thy bright Example, though at a great Diſtance. Firſt, Martyrs and Confeſſors: Next, Thoſe beloved and admired Princes, who have governed their Kingdoms in Righteouſneſs; to whom the Honour of God, and the Good of the World, has been far dearer, than Pleaſure, than Empire, than abſolute Power, or that ominous Blaze that is now called Glory. And next follow, hold! this is the Work of Angels, they muſt Marſhal the Field of Glory in the End of all things. O my God, may *I*, at leaſt, be one, to fill the Train of this Triumphant Proceſſion in that Bleſſed Day, when thou ſhalt Crown the Zeal and Patience of thy Saints! Thus have I given a ſhort Account of *Zeal*. I will now endeavour to kindle it in every Breaſt by ſome few Conſiderations; which will at once evince the *Neceſſity*, and declare the *Fruit* of it.

1. Our *own* Security and Happineſs demand of us a *Zeal* fruitful in *good Works*.

2. It is indiſpenſable to the Welfare and Good of our *Neighbour*.

3. It miniſters moſt effectually to the *Glory of God*.

1. Our *own* Salvation and Happineſs depend

pend upon it. For without *this*, we reject, or at leaſt fruſtrate the *Counſels of God, againſt our own Souls*; 'twas for this Chriſt Died, that *he might purify to himſelf a peculiar people zealous of good works.* This is the great End of our *Election*; *God hath choſen us in Chriſt before the foundation of the world, that we ſhould be holy and without blame before him in love*, Epheſ. 1. 4. which is to be explained by *Epheſ.* 2. 10. where God is ſaid to have *before ordain'd that we ſhould walk in good works.* And the beginning of the *verſe* minds us, that 'tis for *this* End God imparts the Light of his Word, and the Vigour of his Spirit; that for *this* End he ſanctifies and renews our Nature: *We are his workmanſhip created in Chriſt Jeſus unto good works.* St. *Peter* tells us, That this is that which all the great and precious Promiſes of God immediately aim at: Firſt Godlineſs; then Life: Firſt Virtue; then Glory. What ſhall I ſay more? Our *Lord* in his Narrative of the Laſt Judgment, and elſewhere; and his *Apoſtles* in almoſt innumerable Places, have with great Power, and great Earneſtneſs inculcated *this* Doctrine, that we ſhall *be judged according to our Works*: That Immortality and Glory is the Portion, not of Knowledge, but Patience and Charity; not of an Orthodox Belief and Specious Pretenſi-

on, but of Righteousness and Zeal; for the *incorruptible*, the *never-fading Crown*, is *a Crown of Righteousness*. Or if Men will be judg'd by their *Faith*, which is not the Language of the *Gospel*, this does not alter the Matter at all; since *Faith* it self will be judg'd by its *Works*. And as a happy *Eternity* depends upon our *Zeal*, so nothing else can give us any comfortable, any rational Assurance of it in *this* Life. The Reason is plain; because 'tis *Zeal* that is the only unquestionable Proof of our Integrity; and *Good Works* are the Fruit which alone can evidence the Life and Truth of our *Faith* and *Love*; *hereby we know, that we know him, if we keep his Commandments*, 1 John 2. 3. *Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works; and I will shew thee my faith by my works*, Jam. 2. 18. Dost thou believe in *God*? Why art thou not *holy as He is holy*? Dost thou believe in *Jesus*? Why dost thou not *deny thy self, take up thy cross and follow him*? Why dost thou not walk as he walk'd? Dost thou believe a Judgment to come? Why dost thou not *work out thy Salvation with fear and trembling*? Why dost thou not *prepare to meet thy God*? Why art thou not *rich in good Works*, that thou mayest *lay up a good foundation against the time to come, and lay*

hold

hold on Eternal Life? Nor are *good Works* leſs neceſſary to prove our *Love* than *Faith.* Certainly if we love Holineſs, if we *hunger and thirſt after Righteouſneſs,* we ſhall never live in a direct Contradiction to the ſtrongeſt Paſſions of our Soul; we ſhall never refuſe to gratify an Inclination, which is not only fervent in us, but its Gratification will procure us Eternal Rewards too. Certainly, if we *love God,* we cannot but ſeek his Glory; we cannot but be deſirous to maintain Communion with him. And if ſo, do we know any *Sacrifice* that is more acceptable to *God* than *good Works?* do we know any that he delights in more than *Zeal?* Do we *Love* the *Bleſſed Jeſus?* Are not *good Works* the very Teſt of this Love which himſelf has appointed? *If a man love me, he will keep my commandments,* John 14. 15. *Ye are my friends if ye do whatſoever I command you,* John 15. 14. *The love of Chriſt,* ſaith the Apoſtle, *conſtrains us* what to do, *to live not to our ſelves, but to him that died for us, and roſe again,* 2 Cor. 5. 15. What other Returns can we make to Jeſus? What other way can we expreſs our Gratitude to him? He Sits on the Right Hand of God; *all power is given him in heaven and in earth:* He does not himſelf need our Miniſtry, nor want our Service and Charity; but hear what he

ſays, *In as much as you did it to one of theſe my little ones, you have done it to me*, Matt. 25. 40.

2. Our *Zeal* is indiſpenſably neceſſary to the Welfare and Happineſs of *Others*. Do we regard our Neighbours Eternal Intereſt? 'Tis *Zeal* repreſſes Sin, and propagates Righteouſneſs; 'tis *Zeal* defends the Faith, and ſuppreſſes Hereſy and Error; 'tis *Zeal* converts the Unbeliever, and builds up the Believer; 'tis *Zeal* that awakens the Drowſy, quickens the Lukewarm, ſtrengthens the Weak, and enflames the Good with a holy Emulation; 'tis *Zeal* that baffles all Objections, refutes all Calumnies, and vanquiſhes all Oppoſitions raiſed againſt Religion, and oppreſſes its Enemies with Shame and Confuſion. 'Tis, in a word, *Zeal*, and *Zeal* alone, that can make Religion appear lovely and delightful, and reconcile the World to it: For this alone can *adorn the Goſpel*; for it renders Virtue more conſpicuous, more taking in Life and Example, than it can be in the Precepts and Deſcriptions of Words. Nor is *Zeal* leſs ſerviceable to the *Temporal*, than *Eternal* Intereſt of Mankind. When God laid the Foundations of the *World*, he laid the Foundation of *Virtue* too; and when he formed *Man*, he wove the Neceſſity of

good

good Works into his very *Nature.* How neceſſary is *Juſtice* to poor Creatures who lie ſo open to Wrongs and Injuries? How indiſpenſable is *Charity*, or *Generoſity*, to theſe who are expos'd to ſo many Accidents, to ſo many Wants, to ſuch a Viciſſitude of Fortune? And being all ſubject to ſo many Follies and Infirmities, to ſo many Miſtakes and Fancies, how ſtrong muſt be our Obligation to mutual *Forbearance*, *Patience*, and *Gentleneſs?* In a word, *Sin* and *Miſery* abounds in the World; and if there were not Virtues and good Works to ballance the *one*, and to relieve and ſupport us under the *other*, Life would be intollerable. So that Reveal'd and Natural Religion do neceſſarily terminate and center in a *Zeal* for good Works as their ultimate End, and utmoſt Perfection in this Life; and that Rule of our Saviour, *Whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do to you, do ye even ſo unto them*, is an Abſtract, not only of the Law and the Prophets, but of the Code of Nature too; and this ſingle Principle, if ſincerely purſued, will ferment and work us up to the nobleſt Heights of *Zeal.* I might here, if it were neceſſary, eaſily ſhew that *Zeal* has as happy an Influence on the *publick* as the *private*; that *this* muſt animate that Juſtice and Mercy that ſupports the Throne; that it is the Soul

Soul of that Honour, Integrity, Generosity, and Religion, which support the States and Kingdoms of the World; and without which all Politick Systems must needs tend to a Dissolution. But I have said enough; and from what I have said, the Truth of my *Third* Consideration naturally appears.

3. *Viz.* That *Zeal* ministers most effectually to the Glory of God. For if *Zeal* be in it self thus lovely, thus necessary; if the Fruits and Effects of it be thus serviceable to the Temporal and Eternal Interest of Man; What a Lovely, what an Agreeable Notion of God shall we form from this one Consideration of him, That he is the great Author of it? That he is the Origin and Fountain of that Light and Heat, of that Strength and Power of which 'tis compounded and constituted? He commands and exacts it; he excites and encourages to it by the Promise of an Eternal Crown, and the ravishing Fruition of Himself: He has planted the Seeds of it in our Nature, and he cherishes them by the blessed and vigorous Influences of his Word and Spirit. How gracious is the Divine *Nature!* how gracious is the Divine *Government!* when the Substance of his Laws is, That we should love as Brethren, that

that we ſhould cloath the naked, feed the hungry, deliver the captive, inſtruct the fooliſh, comfort the afflicted, forgive one another, if need be, ſeven times a day; and ſuch like. If to do all this be an Argument of being *Regenerate*, and *born of God*; if this be a Proof of his Spirit ruling in us, his Nature communicated to us, and his Image ſtamp'd upon us, how amiable muſt *God* be when *we* diſcern ſo much Benefit, and ſo much Pleaſure, and ſo much Beauty, and ſo much Lovelineſs in thoſe Qualities which are but faint and imperfect Reſemblances of Him! In a word, the *Holineſs* of *his* Children and Servants, is a Demonſtration of the *Holineſs* of *God* himſelf; and in this conſiſts the very Luſtre of Divine Glory. Holineſs is the Flower of all his Attributes; the moſt *Perfect*, becauſe the moſt *Comprehenſive* of all his Divine Perfections; for *Holineſs* includes *Wiſdom*, *Power*, and *Goodneſs*. As to *Goodneſs*, the Caſe is ſo plain, that *Holineſs* and *Goodneſs* are commonly uſed as Terms equivalent. As to *Wiſdom*, 'tis evident, That no Action is commendable and lovely, whatever the Matter of it be, unleſs the Principle, the Motive of it be *Wiſe* and *Rational*; therefore *Wiſdom* cannot be ſeparated from the Notion of *Holineſs*. Laſtly, As to *Power*, this muſt needs be compriſed in it too; for

Beneficence,

Beneficence, which is at least one great Branch of *Holiness*, must unavoidably imply *Power* in the *Benefactor*, and *Impotence* and *Want* in the *Beneficiary*. And this is the Notion wherein *Holiness*, when ascribed to God in Scripture, is generally taken. *Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts: Heaven and Earth are full of thy Glory*, does express the Greatness and Majesty, as well as the Rectitude and Purity of the Divine Nature; and to *sanctify the Lord God in our Hearts*, is, in the Language of the Scripture, not only to love him for his Goodness, but revere and fear him for his Majesty and Greatness. Need I here add, that the Excellencies of the *Creature*, their Fitness and Subserviency to the great Ends of their Creation, is the Glory of the *Creator*, just as the Beauty, Strength, and Convenience of the *Work*, is the Honour of the *Architect*? If the Sun, Moon, and Stars, the irrational and inanimate Parts of the Creation, shew forth the Glory of God, how much more do spiritual and rational Beings? And *Virtue* is the Perfection of *Reason*, and *Zeal* of *Virtue*; for this is that which does directly and immediately advance those great Ends that are dearest to God, as I have, I think, abundantly made out.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

Of Humility.

OUR Saviour has ſo often pronounced the *humbleſt*, the *greateſt* in the Kingdom of Heaven; He has ſo often promiſed the *firſt* place and the *greateſt* Exaltation to the *loweſt* Condeſcenſions; He was Himſelf ſo illuſtrious an Example of *Lowlineſs of Heart*, of *Poverty of Spirit*; and the Apoſtle has ſo expreſly aſſerted his *Joy and Crown* to be the Reward of his *Humility*, *Phil.* 2. that I can never think that Man can ever riſe to a more eminent Height, than *that* to which the Imitation of this Virtue of Chriſt will advance him. The more *Perfect* therefore Man is, the more *Humble* muſt he be too: The clearer View, and the more aſſured Hope he has of Heaven, the more unconcerned muſt he be for all thoſe things which the World pays a Reſpect and Honour to, the more he muſt be above them: The more fervent his Love of God and his Neighbour grows, the more confidently muſt he place all his Glory in this one thing, the Conformity of his Affections and Life to that of the Bleſſed Jeſus. Then is he *Perfect*, and

and *the ſame mind is in him that was in Chriſt Jeſus.* Finally, The more he *knows* God, the nearer he is admitted into *Communion* with him; the more plainly will he diſcern at how infinite Diſtance he ſtands from the Divine Majeſty and Purity, and will proſtrate himſelf even into *Duſt and Aſhes* before him. The *Perfect* Man admires, adores, obeys, loves, relies, truſts, and reſigns up himſelf and all that is dear to him to God. He is nothing in his own Eyes; he pretends to nothing, he lays Claim to nothing on any other Title than that of the Goodneſs and Bounty of God: Whatever Virtues he has, he aſcribes them to the Grace of God; and the Glory and Immortality he expects, he expects only as the *Gift of God through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.* And whatever he be in *himſelf*, he compares not himſelf with *others*, but he proves his *own Work*, that he may *have rejoicing in himſelf alone, and not in another.* Nothing but *Zeal* for God, or *Charity* for Man, can put him upon the aſſerting his own Merit or Service; but when he Glories, it is like St. *Paul*, in his *Infirmities*, that *the power of Chriſt may reſt upon him.*

Need I here inſiſt on the *Fruit* of Humility? Surely 'tis conſpicuous to every one that thinks at all. Great is the Peace and Reſt of the *humble* Soul *here*; and great will

will be his Glory *hereafter*. He who loves not the World nor the things of it, *the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eyes, and the pride of life*, enjoys a perpetual Calm and Serenity of Mind. There is no Object that can raiſe any Storm in him; there is nothing that can breed in him uneaſy Deſires and Fears. He that loves the *Father*, is fix'd on an immutable and perfect Good; and he that *now* quits all for God, ſhall *one day* participate of the Fulneſs of God, and that for ever.

Need I invite and exhort Man to *Humility*? Need I guard him againſt ſpiritual *Pride*? One would think 'twere altogether uſeleſs to attempt it. Is it poſſible that the *Creature* ſhould think himſelf ſo independent of his *Creator*, that he ſhould be able to pay him more Service than were due to him? Is it poſſible that Man ſhould ſet ſuch a rate upon his own Righteouſneſs, as to think it capable of deſerving the utmoſt Rewards that an Infinite God can beſtow upon him? Is it poſſible, in a word, that *Man*, poor, frail, ſinful *Man*; *Man* that can do nothing that is good, but by the Aſſiſtance of Divine Grace; *Man*, depraved and corrupted in his *Nature*, and but a very ill husband of *Grace*; is it poſſible, I ſay, that *Man* ſhould be *proud* towards *God*, towards that Glorious and Incom-

Incomprehenſible Being, who is the Creator and Lord, the Monarch and Patron, the God and Father of Heaven and Earth? But as abſurd as this is, univerſal Experience teaches us, that *Humility*, true *Humility* is a hard Leſſon; and that very excellent Perſons are not out of the Danger of falling into vicious Elations of Mind. In order therefore to promote the one, and ſecure us againſt the other, I will propoſe theſe Two or Three Conſiderations.

1. There never was meer Man yet that did not fall ſhort of his Duty.

2. *Man* is the Creature of *God*, depends upon him, and has received all from him; and therefore let him do the utmoſt he can, he does no more than his *Duty*.

3. God ſtands in no Need of our Service; and 'tis our *own*, not *his* Intereſt we promote by it.

1. There never was meer Man yet, *&c.* For Proof of this, I will not fly to Original Corruption, or Sins of Infirmity. Alas! I need not. The Apoſtle, *Rom.* 1. and 2. and 3. *Ch.* lays the Foundation of Juſtification by Faith, in the univerſal Defection and Depravation of Mankind.

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They are altogether gone out of the way, there is none that doth Good, no not one. And what *Sins* he there charges the World with, the *Catalogue* he gives us of them will inform us. But are *we* no better than *they*? I Answer, the Light of the Gospel, and the preventing Grace of God has undoubtedly given a great Check to the Progress of Sin in the World: But since no Man can be Justified but through Faith in the Blood of Jesus, 'tis plain that *we* too must be concluded under Sin. And though *our* Sins may not in the Number or Scandal equal *theirs*; yet we ought to remember too, that every Sin is the more provoking, the more voluntary it is; and the greater the Grace is which it resists and despises. But what need I compare our Selves with the *Jew* or *Gentile*? What need I prove by Argument and Authority that no Man ever yet liv'd, or will live without Sin? I mean Mortal Sin. Who ever yet look'd back diligently into his past Life, and did not meet with Stains and Deformities enough? When I consider what Legions of Sins are rang'd under those two Banners of the Devil, the Filthiness of the *Flesh*, and of the *Spirit*; when I call to mind Envy, Discontent, Murmuring, Distrust, Pride, Covetousness, Ambition, Wilfulness, Contention, Frowardness, Passion,

Diſſimulation, Falſhood, Flattery, and a thouſand other Sins; and when I reflect upon the Weakneſſes and Propenſions of Nature, and the almoſt innumerable Temptations to which we are expoſed; I muſt confeſs I am not at all ſurprized to think, that no Fleſh can be juſtified in the ſight of God by a Covenant of Works: And when even I hear any upon a Death-bed, as I do ſome, acquitting themſelves from the Guilt of any Deliberate Wickedneſs, I rather admire their Ignorance and Partiality, than their Innocence. And yet, after all, a Good man is not to examine himſelf only concerning the evil that he has done, but alſo concerning the Good which he has omitted. He muſt enquire, how far he has fallen ſhort of that Poverty of Spirit, and Purity of Heart, which he ought to have come up to: And how far he has been wanting in thoſe Duties which a thorough Zeal would have puſh'd him on to: And when he has done this, let him be proud if he can.

2. *Man* is the Creature of *God*, depends upon him, and has receiv'd all from Him. And therefore let him do the utmoſt he can, he does no more than his Duty: And ſtrictly ſpeaking, cannot merit of *him*. He that will pretend to *Merit*, muſt be his own Maſter; he muſt have a right over his

his own Actions; he must be free to dispose of his Affections and Services as he pleases. For if he be antecedently bound, if he have no Liberty, no Freedom, no Right to dispose of himself, or any thing he is possessed of, 'tis plain such an one cannot *merit*. And this is the direct Case between *God* and *Man*. God is the great Lord, the great Proprietor of Heaven and Earth. He that gives Alms, does but restore a part of what God lent him: He that takes patiently the Loss of Goods, or Health, or Friends, does but give back what he had no Right to retain: He was but Tenant at Will, and had no Right to any thing longer than God thought fit to continue it. And in all other Instances of Duty the Case will be still plainer. If he adore and worship God, there is infinite Reason that he should; for he depends upon him for his Being and Preservation. If he love God never so much, God has deserv'd much more than he can pay Him: Not only the Enjoyments of Life, but even Life it self, being derived from Him. From this Argument it will follow, that it is impossible for a *Creature* to *merit* of its *Creator*. *Angels* themselves never could. For might it not be said with as much Truth concerning them, as concerning Man, *Who made thee to differ? or what hast*

thou which thou didſt not receive? And if thou haſt received it, why doſt thou boaſt as if thou hadſt not received it? 1 Cor. 4. 7. And the ſame may be concluded concerning *Adam* in *Paradiſe*. For I demand, Had he kept the Covenant of God, had he done this by Divine *Grace*, or by his *own* Strength? If by the *Grace* of God, as Divines generally hold, then may we apply the Expreſſion of St. *Auſtin* to *Adam*, as well as to any one now under the Diſpenſation of the *Goſpel*: That *when God rewards the works of Man, he does only crown in him his own Gifts*. But ſuppoſe he had done this by his *own* Natural Strength: Were not the Endowments of *Nature*, as much the Gifts of *God*, as the Endowments of *Grace*? the one were *Natural*, the other *Supernatural* Gifts: Both *Gifts* ſtill, though of a different kind. If it be here *Objected*, If this be ſo, how comes St. *Paul* to affirm, *To him that worketh is the reward due, not of Grace but of Debt?* Rom. 4. 4. I *Anſwer*, *Firſt*, God ſeems, when he enters into Covenant with Man, to ſuſpend, or lay aſide the natural Right which He has over him as his Creature; and to tranſact with him as free, and Maſter of himſelf: But this is all infinite Condeſcenſion. *Secondly*, It ſeems unſuitable to the infinite Goodneſs of God, to bereave Man of the Life and Hap-

Happineſs he has once conferr'd upon him, unleſs he forfeits it by ſome Demerit: *The Gifts and calling of God are without Repentance*; nor can I think how *Death*, which has ſo much Evil in it, could have enter'd the World, if *Sin* had not enter'd it firſt. In this Senſe, *unſinning* Obedience gives a kind of *right* to the *Continuance* of thoſe good things, which are at *firſt* the meer Effects of Divine Grace and Bounty. *Laſtly*, A Covenant of Works being once eſtabliſh'd, 'tis plain that as Sin *forfeits* Life, ſo Obedience muſt give a *right* to it: And as the Penitent could not be reſtored, but by an Act of Grace, ſo he that commits no Sin, would need no Pardon But then Life it ſelf, and an Ability to work Righteouſneſs, muſt be owing to Grace antecedent to the *Covenant*: And ſo ſuch an one would have whereof to *boaſt* comparatively, with reſpect to *others* who fell; but not before *God*. The Sum of all is, *Man* has nothing to render to *God*, but what he has received from him: And therefore can offer him nothing but *his own*: Which is no very good Foundation for Merit. But ſuppoſe him abſolute Maſter of himſelf; Suppoſe him holding all things independent of God. Can the Service of a few Days merit Immortality and Glory, Angelical Perfection, and a Crown? He

must be made up of Vanity and Presumption, that dares affirm *this*.

3. God stands in no need of our Service; and 'tis our *own*, not *his* Interest we promote by it. The Foundation of Merit amongst *Men* is *Impotence* and *Want*: The Prince wants the Service and Tribute of the Subject; the Subject the Protection of the Prince: The Rich needs the Ministry and the Labour of the Poor; the Poor Support and Maintenance from the Rich. And it is thus in Imaginary, as well as Real Wants. The Luxury and Pleasure of one must be provided for and supported by the Care and Vigilance of others: And the Pomp and the Pride of one part of the World cannot subsist, but on the Servitude of the other. In these Cases therefore, mutual *Wants* create mutual Rights, and mutual Merit. But this is not the Case between *God* and *Man*. *God* is not subject to any Wants or Necessities; Nor is his Glory or Happiness capable of Diminution or Increase. *He* is a Monarch, that needs no Tribute to Support his Grandeur, nor any Strength or Power, besides his own, to guard his Throne. If *we* revolt, or rebel, we cannot injure *Him*: If *we* be loyal and obedient, we cannot profit *Him*. He has all Ful-

Fulneſs, all Perfection in himſelf: He is an Almighty and All-ſufficient God. But on the quite contrary, though *God* have no *Wants*, *we* have many: And though *his* Majeſty and Felicity be ſubject to no Viciſſitude, *we* are ſubject to many. Our Service to *God* therefore is our *own* Intereſt; and our Obedience is deſign'd to procure our *own* Advantage: We need, we daily need his Support and Protection; we depend intirely on His Favour and Patronage: *In him we live, and move, and have our Being*: And from *Him*, as from an inexhauſtible Fountain, we derive all the Streams of Good, by which we are refreſhed and improved. To know, and love Him is our Wiſdom; to depend upon Him, our Happineſs and Security; to ſerve and worſhip Him, our Perfection and Liberty; to enjoy Him will be our Heaven; and thoſe Glimpſes of his Preſence, which we are vouchſafed thorough the Spirit in this Life, are the Pledges and Foretaſte of it. This is the conſtant Voice of Scripture: *Every good Gift, and every perfect Gift is from above, and cometh from the Father of Lights*, Jam. 1. 17. *If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; for the World is mine, and the Fulneſs thereof. Will I eat the Fleſh of Bulls, or drink the Blood of Goats? Offer unto God Thankſgi-*

wing, and pay thy Vows unto the moſt high: and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou ſhalt glorify me, Pſal. 50. 12, 13, *&c. If thou be Righteous, what giveſt thou unto him? Thy Wickedneſs may hurt a Man, as thou art, and thy Righteouſneſs may profit the Son of Man,* Job 35. 7, 8.

SECT. III.

Of the Impediments *of* Perfection.

THough I have been all along carrying on the *Deſign* of this *Section*, that is, the Removing the Obſtacles of *Perfection*; yet I eaſily foreſaw there might be *ſome* which would not be reduc'd within the Compaſs of the foregoing *Heads*: For *theſe* therefore I reſerv'd this Place. Theſe are *Five*.

1. Too *eaſy* and *looſe* a *Notion* of Religion.

2. An Opinion that *Perfection* is *not attainable*.

3. That *Religion* is an Enemy to *Pleaſure*.

4. The

4. The *Love* of the *World*; in a higher Degree at leaſt than will conſiſt with *Perfection*.

5. The *Infirmity* of the *Fleſh*.

§. 1. Some ſeem to have entertain'd ſuch a *Notion* of *Religion*, as if Moderation here, were as neceſſary as any where elſe. They look upon *Zeal* as an *Exceſs* of Righteouſneſs; and can be well enough content to want Degrees of Glory, if they can but ſave their Souls. To which End they can ſee no Neceſſity of *Perfection*. Now I would beſeech ſuch ſeriouſly to lay to Heart, that Salvation and Damnation are Things of no *common* Importance: And therefore it highly concerns them not to be miſtaken in the *Notion* they form to themſelves of *Religion*. For the Nature of Things will not be altered by their Fancies; nor will God be mocked or impoſed on. If we will deal ſincerely with our ſelves, as in this Caſe it certainly behoves us to do, we muſt frame our *Idea* of *Religion*, not from the Opinions, the Manners, or the Faſhions of the *World*; but from the *Scriptures*. And we muſt not interpret *theſe* by our own Inclinations; but we muſt judge of the Duties they preſcribe, by thoſe Deſcriptions of them, by thoſe Properties and Effects, which we find

find there. We muſt weigh the *Deſign* and *End* of Religion; which is to promote the Glory of God, and the Good of Man, and to raiſe us above the World, and the Body: And ſee how our Platform or Model of Religion *ſuits* with it. And if after we have done this, we are not fully ſatisfied in the true Bounds and Limits which part Vice and Virtue, it cannot but be ſafeſt for us to err on the right hand. We ought always to remember too, That the repeated Exhortations in Scripture to Diligence, and that the moſt earneſt and indefatigable ones, to Vigilance, to *Fear, and Trembling*, to Patience, to Stedfaſtneſs, and ſuch like, are utterly inconſiſtent with an eaſy, lazy, gentile Religion. That the *Life* of *Jeſus* is the faireſt and fulleſt Comment on his *Doctrine*: And, That we never are to follow the Examples of a corrupt World, but of the beſt Men, and the beſt Ages. This, this one thing alone, will convince us, *what* Endeavours, *what* Virtues are neceſſary to gain an incorruptible Crown. See with what Eagerneſs the *Diſciples* of *Jeſus preſſed towards the mark!* See with what Courage, nay Joy too, they *took up their Croſs and followed Him!* How generous were their *Alms!* So that the *Riches of their Liberality* were conſpicuous in the very *Depth of*

their

their Poverty. What Plainneſs and Singleneſs of Heart; what Grace and Warmth, what Peace and Joy ſhew'd it ſelf in their Converſation! what Modeſty, what Humility in their Garb, Deportment, and the whole Train of Life! How frequent, how fervent, and how long too, were their Prayers and Retirements! In one word, the Spirit and Genius of a Diſciple of Chriſt diſcover'd it ſelf in all they ſaid and did: And the Virtues of their *Lives* did as evidently diſtinguiſh a *Chriſtian* from a *Jew*, or *Pagan*, as their *Faith*. How lovely was Religion *then*! how full its Joy, how ſtrong its Confidence! *Then* did Chriſtians truly overcome the World: *Then* did they live above the Body: *Then* was the Croſs of Chriſt more delightful, than the Eaſe, or Honour, the Pride, or Pleaſure, of a ſinful Life: *Then* did they truly, thorough the Spirit, wait for the Hope of Righteouſneſs by Faith. Let us now compare *our* Lives with *theirs*, and then ſit down content with poor and beggarly Attainments if we can. Let us put *our* Virtues in the Scales againſt *theirs*; and, if we have any Modeſty, the Inequality will put us out of Countenance: We ſhall bluſh at our Vanity; and ſhall not have the Confidence to expect the ſame Crown, the ſame Kingdom with them. But as

too

too lax a Notion of Religion is apt to beget too much Indifference and Unconcernment; ſo will it be ſaid, too exalted an one is apt to beget *Deſpair*: which is a *Second* and no *leſs Obſtacle* of *Perfection*.

§. 2. Many there are, who forming their Judgment upon the Slips and Defects of Good men, and the Corruption of Human Nature, conceive *Perfection* to be a meer imaginary Notion. They believe indeed, that, conſidering how apt Man is to fall ſhort of his Duty, 'tis very fit that the Rule preſcrib'd him ſhould be exact; and that he ſhould be frequently preſſed, and exhorted to *Perfection*: But that the thing it *ſelf* is too difficult for Mortal Man to attain in this Life. But to this *Objection* I muſt oppoſe *theſe* few things which I believe will be ſufficient to remove it. 1. The *Beginning* of Virtue is the moſt difficult part of it: The nearer we approach to *Perfection*, the eaſier, as well as pleaſanter, is Religion. And therefore, whoever ſtartles at the Difficulties, which lie in the way to an exalted Virtue, has as much reaſon to be ſtartled at thoſe which will encounter him in his firſt Entrance upon Religion: And yet *theſe* muſt be conquered. 2. The avoiding the Difficulties of Religion, does but plunge us into worſe. We are neceſſarily under this *Dilemma*:

lemma: If we will attain the Peace and Tranquility of the *Mind*, we muſt mortify and reduce the Appetites of the *Body*: If on the other hand, we propoſe to gratify the Appetites of the *Body*, and enjoy the Pleaſure of *Sin*, we cannot do ſo without offering much Violence to the *Mind*. And if this be ſo; if ſuch be the War and Oppoſition between the Soul and the Body, that there is no way to a true and well-ſetled Peace and Pleaſure, but by the Reduction and Mortification of the one, or the other; *then* it will be eaſy to reſolve what we are to do. For thoſe Appeals which Atheiſts themſelves make to Reaſon, proclaim the *Soul* of Man to be the Ruling and Nobler part of him. Beſides, the *Soul* is the more vital, the more tender and ſenſible part of us: And conſequently, the Affliction of *this*, muſt render us far more miſerable, than any Hardſhips or Difficulties Virtue can impoſe upon the *Body*. 3. Whatever be the Difficulties of *Virtue*; they will ſoon vaniſh if we often call to mind, That Peace and Joy are the *Fruit* of *Virtue*; but Shame and Remorſe of *Sin*: That no Man ever yet repented of his reſiſting and conquering his Luſts; but no Man ever yet did not repent of following them; unleſs he *died* as much a Brute as he *lived*: That Heaven is a cheap purchaſe,

chase, whatever it costs us; but the Pleasure of Sin a very dear one, how easily soever we come by it: And finally, That we are not our own Masters: There is a God to whom we stand accountable for our Actions: And consequently whether we will, or will not, we must either undergo the Hardship and Discipline of Virtue, or the Eternal Plagues and Punishments of Sin. Lastly, The Truth is, this Opinion of the *Impossibility* of *Perfection*, has both been begot and cherished by those wild *Schemes* of it, which have been drawn by the hands of a flaming, indeed, but an indiscreet Zeal. But I have here recommended to the World, no fantastick, or Enthusiastick *Perfection*. I have advanced no Heights of Virtue, but what many do, I hope, at this day actually feel and experiment in themselves: None, I am sure, but what the *Followers* of the blessed *Jesus* actually attain'd and practis'd. *Be ye followers of us*, said the Apostle, *as we are of Christ*. *Their* Lives were as bright a Rule as their Doctrine: And by their own Actions they demonstrated the Power of the Faith they taught. They did not like the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, *bind heavy Burdens upon others, and not move them with their finger*; they did not, like *Plato* and *Aristotle*, magnify Temperance and Modesty

ſty at the Tabernacles and Carnivals of Princes; nor commend the Pleaſure of Wiſdom in the Gardens of *Epicurus*: But they *ſtood* as they *taught*, unſpotted by the Pleaſures, unbroken by the Troubles of the World; modeſt, ſerene, equal and Heavenly minded, in Honour or Diſhonour, Want or Abundance, Liberty or Priſon, Life or Death. Let us then no longer *Object* or *Diſpute*, but with Faith and Patience be Followers of thoſe who have inherited the Promiſes: Being *encompaſs'd with a Cloud of Witneſſes, let us lay aſide every Weight, and the Sin which doth ſo eaſily beſet us; and let us run with Patience the race that is ſet before us, looking unto Jeſus, the author and finiſher of our Faith; who for the Joy that was ſet before him, endured the Croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame, and is ſet down at the right hand of the Throne of God. For conſider him that endured ſuch Contradiction of Sinners againſt himſelf; leſt ye be wearied and faint in your Mind*, Heb. 12. 1, 2. I have done with thoſe who endeavour to *ſoften* or *ſhun* the Difficulties of Religion, not to *conquer* them.

§. 3. There are *others* who will look upon this ſetting up the Doctrine of *Perfection*, as a Deſign againſt the *Pleaſures* of Mankind. What, ſays ſuch a one, ſhall

shall I let go my present *Pleasures* out of my hands, to hunt after I know not what, and I know not where? Shall I quit *Pleasures* that are every where obvious, for such as have no Being, it may be, but in Speculation? Or at least, are never to be enjoyed by any, but some few rare and happy Creatures, the Favourites of God and Nature? *Pleasures* that have Matter and Substance in them, for such as I can no more grasp and relish than I can Dreams and Visions? But to this I Answer, This pretty Talk is all but stupid Ignorance and gross Mistakes. For, 1. As to innocent and virtuous *Pleasure*, no Man needs part with it. I endeavour not to deprive Man of *this*; but to refine and purify it. And he that prefers, either silly, or vicious *Pleasure* before Religion, is wretchedly mistaken. For, 2. *Perfect* Religion is full of *Pleasure*. Had we but once arrived at true Purity of Heart, what could be so full of *Pleasure* as the Business of Religion? What can be more delightful than blessing and praising God to a grateful Soul; *Allelujahs*, to a Soul snatched from the brink of Destruction, into the Bosom of its Master? What can be more Transporting than the melting Tendernesses of a holy Contrition, made up, like *Mary Magdalen's*, of Tears and Kisses,

Sorrow

Sorrow and Love, Humility and Glory, Confuſion and Confidence, Shame and Joy? What can be more tranſporting than Love, the Love of a Chriſtian, when he is all *Love, as God is Love*; when he *deſires nothing in Heaven nor on Earth, but God*; when *all things are dung and droſs to him in Compariſon of Jeſus?* 4. If the *Pleaſures* of the *World* be more tranſporting than thoſe of *Religion*, 'tis becauſe our Faith is weak, our Love imperfect, and our Life unſteady. A conſtant and exalted *Pleaſure* is, I grant it, the Fruit of *Perfection* alone. The *Peace and Joy* of the Holy Ghoſt reigns no where, but where that *Zeal and Love*, which is an Effect of the Fulneſs of the Spirit, reigns too. I had once propoſed to have inſiſted on the Reaſons of this here; but this Labour is prevented, for they are very obvious to any one, who hath read the *Chapter* of *Zeal* with Seriouſneſs and Attention. Laſtly, What is inſinuated in the *Objection*, That the *Pleaſures* of the *World* are more numerous, or obvious, than thoſe of *Religion*, is altogether a falſe and groundleſs Fancy. In every Place, and in every State, do the Pleaſures of Virtue wait upon the *Perfect* Man. They depend not, like thoſe of the Body, on a thouſand things that are not in our power, but only on God, and our own

Integrity. But this part of the Objection I have, I think, for ever baffled, *Sect.* 1. *Chap.* 4. These *Obstacles* of *Perfection* being thus removed, and the Mind of Man being fully convinced of the Happiness that results from a State of *Perfection*, and of his Obligation to surmount the Difficulties which obstruct his way to it, there seems to be nothing now left to disappoint the Success of this Discourse, but somewhat too much Fondness for the *World*, or somewhat too much Indulgence to the *Body*; which I am *next*, though but very *briefly*, to consider.

§. 4. There is a *Love* of the *World*, which though it be not either for the Matter, or Degree of it, Criminal enough to destroy our Sincerity, and our Hopes of Salvation; yet is it strong enough to abate our Vigour, hinder our *Perfection*, and bereave us of many Degrees of Pleasure at present, and Glory hereafter. The *Indications* of this kind of Love of the World, are too much concern for the Pomp and Shew of Life; too much Exactness in the Modes and Customs of it; too quick a Sense of Honour and Reputation, Pre-eminence and Praise; too much Haste, and too much Industry to grow Rich, to *add House to House, Land to Land, and to cloath*

our Selves with thick and heavy Clay; too brisk a Reliſh of the Pleaſures of the World; too great a *Gaiety* of Mind upon the Succeſſes; too much *Dejection* upon the Diſaſters and Diſappointments of it; too much Care, and too much Diligence; an encumbring and embroiling ones ſelf too far in worldly Affairs; too much Diverſion, too much Eaſe. Theſe, I ſay, are the Symptoms of a Mind tainted with a Love of the World, though not ſo far as to Sickneſs and Death. However, it will be enough to check the Vigour, and dilute the Reliſh of the Mind. Now the only way to overcome this Defect, and to captivate the Mind entirely to the Love and Service of Religion and Virtue, is to conſider frequently and ſeriouſly the Rewards of *Perfection*, the Pleaſure that will attend it in another Life. Had the *Young Man* in the *Goſpel* done this; had he had as lively a Notion, and as true an Eſtimate of the Riches of *Eternity*, as he had of *Temporal* ones, he would never *have gone away ſorrowful*, when he was adviſed to have exchanged the Treaſures of *Earth* for thoſe of *Heaven*. Had the Soul of *Martha* been as much taken up with the Thoughts of *Eternity*, as that of *Mary*, ſhe would have made the ſame *Choice* as *ſhe did*. They who often *think*, how ſoon the Faſhion, the Pomp and Grandeur of this

World passes away, and how much better their *Heavenly* Country is than their *Earthly*; how much more lasting, and how much more glorious, the *New Jerusalem*, that *City that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God*, than this City of ours, which may be overthrown in a moment; will neither weep, nor rejoyce, with too much Passion; neither buy, nor possess, with too much Application of Mind. In one word, he that so often and devoutly *thinks* of that day, wherein *Christ, who is our life, shall appear, and we also appear with him in glory*, that he comes to *love* and *long* for it; such an one will have no great Taste of the Honours, or the Pleasures, or the Interests of Life; nor will he be slothful, or remiss, but *fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord*. Whatever Degrees of Affection he had for any thing of that nature, they will all vanish; he will have no Emulation, but for good Works; no Ambition, but for *Glory*; I mean, *that* which is *Eternal*. In the pursuit of *this* will he lay out the Strength and Vigour of his Mind, for *this* he will retrench his Profit, for *this* he will deny his Pleasure, for *this* he will be content to be Obscure, Mean, and Laborious; for if the *World* be once crucified to him, *he* will the more easily bear the being crucified to *it*.

§. 5. After

§. 5. After all, there is an *Infirmity* in the *Fleſh*, againſt which if we do not guard our ſelves, if we do not ſtruggle heartily, we ſhall *miſcarry*. *The Spirit is willing*, ſaid our Saviour, *but the Fleſh is weak*. Without much Care, and much Watchfulneſs, the Vigour of our Minds will be relax'd; the Exultation of our Spirits will flag and droop; and we ſhall ſoon loſe the Reliſh there is in Religion. The moſt effectual *Remedies* againſt this Frailty and Fickleneſs of our Nature, are *two*. *Firſt*, Godly *Fear*; and *this*, the Purity and Preſence of God, the Strictneſs and the Impartiality of a Judgment to come, the Loſs of an Eternal Crown, the Terrors of Eternal Puniſhment, the Number and Strength of Temptations, the deplorable Falls of the greateſt Saints, and the Conſcience of our own Weakneſs, will not fail to work in us. Let us then, not only *begin*, but alſo *perfect Holineſs in the fear of God*. *Bleſſed is he that feareth always*. *Secondly*, The Stedfaſtneſs of *Hope*; of Hope that waits and longs for the Coming of our Lord. *This* will invite us often to take a View of *Canaan*; *this* will fill the Mind often with the Beauties and the Glories of Eternity; *this* will often call to our Thoughts, the Security, the Reſt, the Tran-

Transports of another World, the Love of God and of Jesus, incorruptible Crowns, the Hallelujahs of Angels, the Shouts of Victory, the Fruit of the Tree of Life, the Streams that water the Paradise of God. And every such Object will chide us out of our Weakness and Cowardise; every such Thought will upbraid us out of our Laziness and Negligence; we shall hear always sounding in our Ears the Words of *Jesus* to his *Disciples*, *What, can ye not watch with me one hour*, and yet do you expect to reign with me for ever? Or those to the *Church* of *Laodicea*, *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me upon my Throne; as I have overcome, and am set down with my Father on his Throne.*

And now, *Reader*, if you find I have done you any Service, if you think your self under any Obligation to *me*, the *Return* I beg from you is, that you will *first* offer Praise and Thanks unto God; and *next*, whenever you are in the Vigour of the Spirit, in the Ardors of Faith and Love, before God in Prayer, put up these, or the like Petitions for me, which I now offer up for my self.

O My

O My God, and my Father, increaſe the Knowledge of thy Word, and the Grace of thy Spirit in me. Enable me to perfect Holineſs in thy Fear, and to hold faſt the ſtedfaſtneſs of my Hope unto the End. Pardon all the Sins and Errors of my Life; and accept of my imperfect Services through Jeſus Chriſt. And becauſe, though after all we can do, we are unprofitable Servants, thy Infinite Bounty will yet certainly recompence our ſincere Endeavours to promote thy Glory; let me find my Reward from thee; or rather do thou thy ſelf vouchſafe to be my Reward. I ſhould have ever thought my ſelf unworthy to have put up this Petition to thee, O thou glorious and incomprehenſible Majeſty, had not thine own Goodneſs, thine own Spirit kindled this Ambition in me. Behold! what manner of Love is this, that we ſhould be called the Sons of GOD! theſe are the Words of thy Servant St. John: *And now therefore my Soul can never be at reſt, till I awake at the laſt Day after thy Likeneſs; I can never be ſatisfied till I behold thy Glory: Which vouchſafe me, I beſeech thee, by thy Mercy and thy Faithfulneſs; by the Sufferings and Interceſſion of thy Dearly Beloved Son.*

FINIS.